EVALUATION OF AN ADVENTURE-BASED COUNSELING UNIT
TO IMPROVE THE TRANSITION OF AT-RISK
MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

By

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This study examined the effectiveness of an adventure-based counseling (ABC)
unit on students considered to be at-risk because they were overage for their grade and
new to middle school. The dependent measures for the study were school bonding as
measured by the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (PSSMS), attitude
toward school as measured by the Student Attitude Scale Revised (SASR), school
attendance as measured by the number of unexcused absences from school, and self-
efficacy as measured by the Generalized Self-efficacy Scale for Adolescents (GSESA).

School counselors from four Leon County or Wakulla County middle schools
delivered the five-week ABC unit and collected assessment data on participating
students. Eighty students participated in the study, twenty from each of the four schools.
The twenty students at each school were randomly assigned to either treatment or control
groups so that ten of the students at each school participated in the intervention and ten

were placed in a control group. Students in both control and treatment groups were assessed prior to and immediately following the intervention.

ABC is an approach that utilizes structured learning experiences in which participants are presented with a series of novel, non-competitive tasks of increasing difficulty that depend on group interaction, trust, communication, decision-making and problem-solving skills in order to complete. Experiential activities were followed by a processing period. The school counselors conducted the 40-minute ABC sessions once a week for five weeks for the students assigned to the treatment group.

The researcher used an Analysis of Covariance and Repeated Measure Analysis of Variance to determine if differences on the dependent measures existed between control and treatment groups. There were no significant differences between control and treatment group on the PSSMS or the GSESA. There were significant differences between control and treatment groups on SASR and school attendance. However, the differences between control and treatment groups on school attendance were not in the expected direction.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Need for the Study

Early adolescence is a time when students are inundated with significant biological, interpersonal, and environmental change. Their bodies are changing rapidly with the onset of puberty. With the surge in hormones associated with puberty comes the development of intense emotions and mood swings. Their peer groups take on increasing importance as they struggle to form an identity and develop independence and autonomy. Even their thinking patterns begin to change as they move from concrete thinking to more abstract reasoning.

The transition from elementary school to middle school can be a particularly challenging time for early adolescents. During this time, they must not only adjust to the rapid biological and social changes associated with entering puberty, but they must also adjust to a new school environment that is quite different than the elementary schools. Eccles and Midgley (1989, 1990) have proposed that there is a mismatch between the developmental needs of early adolescents and the large, bureaucratic, anonymous structure of middle schools that leads to more negative self-evaluations and more negative attitudes about school by those students making a transition to middle school.

Multiple life transitions occurring at the same time, such as is happening with new middle school students, is associated with increased stress and heightened vulnerability to the development of diseases or other problems. Early adolescence is a time when many students begin to have problems. Between the ages of 11 and 14, psychiatric symptoms and negative behaviors such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and anti-social conduct all show dramatic increases (Hankin et al., 1998; Kazdin, 1993; Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994; Peterson et al., 1993). Along with the increase in psychiatric symptoms seen after the transition to middle school come declines in academic performance, more negative attitudes toward school, increasing disconnection and withdrawal from school, and more negative self-evaluations.

Middle school is a time when many at-risk students begin to withdraw and disengage from school. Dropping out of school has been theorized to be the final step in a cumulative process of withdrawal (Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn, 1992; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989) and disengagement from school (Finn, 1989). Disengagement from school often manifests itself in absenteeism (Jordan, Lara, & McPhartland, 1994), negative attitudes toward school (Beatty, Neisser, Trent, & Heubert, 2001), and lack of academic effort (Beatty et al., 2001). Wehlage et al. (1989) suggest in their theory that in order for at-risk students to remain in school and achieve academically they need additional resources and support to improve school membership and academic engagement.

Unfortunately, middle school is often a time when students are thrust into a new social environment in which they have yet to develop a network of social support. The large size of middle schools can make the task of finding a social niche more challenging

for students (Harter, Whitesell, & Kowalski, 1992). The lack of a familiar peer group can have detrimental effects on self-efficacy and general attitudes toward school (Miller, 1983).

Although some of the problems associated with transitions to middle school appear to improve as students progress through middle school (Alspaugh & Harding, 1995) or are not a problem for all students (Harter et al., 1992; Rudolph, Lambert, Clark & Kurlakowsky, 2001), there are some students who are more vulnerable during transitions and who do not recover their losses after transition to middle school (Gutman & Midgley, 2000).

Students who are particularly at-risk include poor urban youth experiencing a greater number of environmental stressors (Seidman, Allen, Aber, Mitchell, & Feinman, 1994), students who are least academically capable (McLoyd, 1998; Seidman et al., 1994), minority students, and students with high mobility (U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1975).

Students who have been retained and are overage for their grade frequently exhibit one of more of the characteristics listed above. Minority students, students of low SES, and males are retained in significantly higher proportions than white, higher SES, and female students (Meisels & Liaw, 1993). Students who are retained in a grade somewhere between kindergarten and eighth grade have less positive academic as well as emotional and behavioral outcomes when compared with their non-retained peers (Holmes & Saturday, 2000; Meisels & Liaw, 1993).

Adventure-based counseling is a promising approach for working with students considered to be at-risk because they are overage for their grade. ABC utilizes structured

learning experiences in which students must work together to complete challenging tasks. After students have been successful in completing the task, school counselors help students to reflect on their experiences and to apply what they have learned to other areas of their lives.

For example, in the ABC activity Raging Rivers, students must pay close attention to instructions in order to be successful in completing the activity. Most groups have to start the activity over several times before successfully completing the challenge. In the post-activity processing, the school counselor would help students to reflect on the skills the group used during the activity. If students talk about paying close attention as one of the skills that they used, the school counselor would help the students to think about other areas of their lives in which paying close attention might help them to be successful.

Some of the characteristics of adventure-based counseling make it particularly appealing as an intervention for at-risk students. Adventure-based counseling (ABC) uses a group methodology consistent with an adolescent's developmental needs for group membership and socialization (Moote & Wodarski, 1997). It is also designed to be fun and exciting (Glass & Benshoff, 2001) and complements adolescents' propensity towards risk-taking and high energy (Cason & Gillis, 1994). Rather than focusing on the problems of adolescents that need to be remediated, adventure-based counseling emphasizes the strengths that students contribute during the group process (Moote & Wodarski, 1997).

ABC is particularly promising as an intervention for students undergoing a transition to middle school. ABC is designed to build cohesiveness and a sense of belonging among participants. Cooperation, communication, trust, and tolerance are

required in order for group members to be successful at completing ABC initiatives. Presumably, as students feel a sense of bonding to school, they are more likely to come to school regularly and to have more positive attitudes toward school.

ABC is designed to foster caring and supportive relationships among students. Peers can provide emotional support, identity validation, and problem-solving resources that can help students cope with the transition and become bonded to the school. Social and emotional support from peers is predictive of successful transitions to middle school (Bernt, 1999; Bernt & Hawkins, 1988; Goodenow & Grady, 1994; Hirsch & DuBois, 1992).

ABC is also designed to build self-efficacy by giving students opportunities to successfully complete activities that they believe are beyond their abilities. Bandura (1977) suggests that individuals' self-efficacy will be increased if they are successful at completing activities that are subjectively threatening. These gains in self-efficacy may be generalizable when connections are drawn between activities and real life situations. In ABC, the processing or debriefing period is used to aid students in making connections between the adventure-based activity and the challenges they face in their academic work.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of an adventure-based counseling unit on the knowledge, behavior, and attitudes of 6th grade students who are beginning middle school and are considered at-risk because they are overage for their grade level. More specifically the study will examine the effects of an adventure-based

counseling (ABC) unit on students' bonding to school, attitude toward school, school attendance, and self-efficacy.

Theoretical Rationale

ABC can be conceptualized from a variety of viewpoints. This section reviews four different models, Kolb's model of experiential learning (1984), developmental guidance and counseling, brief counseling through counseling units, and resiliency.

ABC can be conceptualized through Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning. In Kolb's model, learning occurs as direct concrete experience is followed by observation and reflection. Observations and reflections are in turn synthesized into the formation of abstract concepts or theories. These theories are generalized to other experiences and serve as guides for new experiences.

Following Kolb's model, ABC uses direct experiences as the starting place in the process of change. Through the process of reflection about the activities, participants gain awareness of feelings, thoughts, and behavior. They are asked to reflect on how the experience might generalize to other areas of their lives. ABC gives participants the freedom to try out new behaviors and ways of thinking in a safe environment (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1994; Gass, 1993; Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988).

Experiential learning is a promising method for working with students experiencing academic difficulties because it engages the emotions, is physically active, and is cognitively meaningful. Experiential learning, such as the learning that occurs in adventure-based counseling, can be defined as learning by doing. Experiential educators believe that people learn best through direct, hands-on experience followed by reflection. According to experiential learning theories, the best way to learn is not to read about how

to solve a problem but to actually practice solving a problem. Experiential learning may help at-risk adolescents to generalize and apply the knowledge that they have acquired (Kraft, 1990).

The ABC unit is a developmental guidance and counseling intervention. The primary goal of developmental guidance and counseling is to help all students become effective and efficient learners by providing them with experiences that enhance their personal, social, and academic growth (Myrick, 1994).

Development is a dynamic process of change that occurs over the lifespan. In the process of development there are specific stages with associated developmental tasks. Developmental counseling and guidance is designed to help students meet developmental challenges by providing them with specific skills and experiences appropriate to their developmental level. As students master important developmental skills and tasks, they become more capable of learning effectively and efficiently. Skills are taught before students are in crisis. By teaching the skills to students before there is a problem, they are better able to manage crises when they do occur (Myrick, 1994).

In addition to completing developmental tasks, developmental counseling and guidance assumes that particular conditions occur which enhance learning and development. These conditions that help facilitate learning are caring, understanding, acceptance, respect, and trustworthiness along with genuineness, warmth, and concreteness (Myrick, 1994).

School counseling interventions are designed to be brief, usually six to eight sessions. The focus is not on making huge changes, but on providing the conditions for

optimal development and looking for small changes over time. Counseling units are utilized to help counselors structure the group experience (Myrick, 1994).

One way to conceptualize the small changes that occur in developmental counseling and guidance is through the concept of resiliency. Resiliency is the ability to bounce back after a crisis. Developmental outcomes are determined by an interaction among risk factors, stressful life events, and protective factors (Werner & Smith, 1982). The frequency, duration and strength of both risk and protective factors as well as the developmental stage at which they occur influence outcomes. If the balance between protective factors and stressful life events is favorable people tend to have positive developmental outcomes. However, if the scales tip in favor of stressful life events, adolescents, who have been resilient in other situations, can develop problems. Intervention can be conceptualized as an attempt to shift the balance between resilience and vulnerability either by increasing the number of protective factors or decreasing exposure to risk factors (Werner, 1990).

For example, a student is at-risk because she has an addicted parent and lives in a poor neighborhood with few resources. She has been doing well in school but has recently moved, and her grandmother has passed away. Her participation in a small group at school may serve as a protective factor helping her to continue her healthy development even in the midst of multiple crises. Without her participation in the small group, the student may be overwhelmed by all the crises in her life and her academic performance may begin to falter.

To summarize, ABC utilizes experiential learning in a brief small group setting in an attempt to teach specific skills, provide the conditions for positive development, and

shift the balance between risk and protective factors so that healthy development occurs. The ABC unit can be viewed as one of the interventions in a developmental guidance and counseling program designed to help all students become effective and efficient learners.

Research Questions

The following research questions were investigated:

- Will students who participate in an adventure-based counseling unit feel more or less of a sense of belonging to school?

- Will students who participate in an adventure-based counseling unit have changed attitudes toward school?

- Will students who participate in an adventure-based counseling unit have changed school attendance?

- Will the generalized self-efficacy of students who participate in an adventure-based counseling unit change?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout the dissertation:

- **Adventure-based counseling (ABC)--** a counseling approach that utilizes structured learning experiences in which participants are presented with a series of novel, non-competitive tasks of increasing difficulty that depend on group interaction, trust, communication, decision-making and problem-solving skills in order to complete. Experiential activities are followed by a processing period. During the processing period participants share what they have learned from the activities and how they might apply what they have learned to other areas of their lives.

- **Counseling unit--** a structured series of counseling activities on a particular topic.

- **Elementary school--** a school that encompasses grades kindergarten through five.

- **Middle school--** a school that encompasses grades six through eight.

- **Transition to middle school--** the process of moving from fifth grade in an elementary school to sixth grade in a middle school.

- **Bonding to school--** a student's perceptions about his or her sense of belonging and quality of social relationships at school.

- **Attitude towards school--** students' perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about school including their attitudes towards school, teachers, and interpersonal relationships with teachers, peers, and self.

- **Self-efficacy--** people's initiative and persistence in the face of adversity based on their beliefs in their own capacity to exert control over the demands of the environment and their functioning.

- **School attendance--** the number of days that a student goes to school during a given time period.

- **At-risk students--** students who are at increased risk for academic, social, behavioral, or emotional problems.

- **Overage students--** students who have been retained in a grade at least once during their school career and who are hence not of typical age for their current grade level.

Organization of the Study

The remainder of the study is organized into four chapters. The related literature is reviewed and analyzed in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, the methodology for the study is described including the population and sampling procedures, research design, hypotheses, the independent variable, assessment instruments utilized, methods for data collection and analysis, and research procedures. The results of the study are presented in Chapter 4, and in Chapter 5, there is a discussion of the results including conclusions, limitations of the findings, other findings, implications, and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The middle school years are a pivotal developmental period (Rudolph et al.,
2001) that is very difficult for many children (Carnegie Council, 1995). During this
period youth experience rapid biological, social, and environmental changes (Rudolph et
al., 2001). The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1995) estimates that over
50 percent of American adolescents are at high or moderate risk of seriously damaging
their future success by engaging in behaviors that are dangerous to themselves or others.

The emergence into adulthood from childhood can be considered a normative life
crisis in which students are more likely to develop problems, but it is also an opportunity
for growth (Gutman & Midgley, 2000). How adolescents negotiate this transition can
have life long ramifications (Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Seidman et al., 1994). For
example, students who fail to transition effectively are at significantly greater risk of
dropping out of school, developing psychological disorders, becoming involved in
delinquent behavior, and/or abusing drugs or alcohol.

Some of the developmental tasks during this time period include identity
formation (Seidman et al., 1994), the development of independence and autonomy
(Carnegie, 1989; Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Eriksson, 1968), physical maturation, a shift
from concrete to formal operations, the development of intense emotions, and the
increasing importance of the peer group (Newman & Newman, 1987). During this period

early adolescents experience the crisis of group identity versus isolation (Eriksson, 1968), and the peer group becomes the primary location for social growth and change (Kaplan & Saddock, 1988).

The Transition to Middle School

In addition to the developmental changes associated with entering puberty, most early adolescents in this country must also adjust to the major ecological transition of changing to a new school. Schools are one of the most influential contexts for shaping human development in American culture. Despite their influence, between 20 and 30 percent of students experience adjustment problems at school (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1981; Rubin & Barlow, 1978).

When students begin middle school, the roles and relationships that were established in elementary school change drastically. Students are thrust into a new social world in which the things expected of them are very different. They are expected to work much more independently and to conform to new sets of rules and regulations (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Fenzel, 1989, 2000). These changes can lead to increased stress that may leave new middle school students more vulnerable to developing academic or emotional problems (Fenzel, 2000). For example, students who are under stress at home and in the community but were successful students in elementary school may find that the demands associated with the transition into adolescence and the transition to middle school deplete their emotional capacity so that they are left with few resources to devote to their school work. The time period of early adolescence can also be particularly problematic if difficulties occur, for it is during this time period that many key educational and career decisions are made (Anderman, Maerh, & Midgley, 1999).

Changes in the School Environment

As students enter middle school they are faced with many new challenges. The learning environment changes drastically between elementary school and middle school. Schools increase in both size and complexity   (Harter et al., 1992). In elementary school, most students spend the majority of their day in self-contained classes with the same peers and teachers. In contrast, middle school students change classes every 40 to 50 minutes. Middle school teachers see hundreds of students each day for short periods of time and are generally viewed by middle school students as more distant, remote, impersonal and controlling of evaluation than elementary school teachers. Disciplinary style changes as well with more specialization, rules, and regulations (Seidman, 1988).

Eccles and Midgley (1989, 1990) have proposed that the more negative self-evaluations, more negative attitudes about school, and the increasing disengagement from school frequently observed by middle school students are caused by a developmental mismatch between the interpersonal needs of adolescents and the structure and functioning of middle schools. As early adolescents grow in their need to make autonomous decisions, schools emphasize discipline and control with few opportunities for decision-making. As students grow in their need to obtain support from adults other than their parents, the school is structured so that relationships with teachers become more impersonal. As students experience an increased self-consciousness, schools put more emphasis on social comparisons as a method of evaluation.

Eccles and Midgley (1989, 1990) hypothesize that if middle schools encourage students to be involved in classroom discussions and decision-making, have high expectations for all students regardless of their ability level, nurture the relationships

between students and staff members, and use individual mastery goals instead of social comparison for evaluation then positive school motivation, behavior, and mental health will result. The four studies discussed below (Feldhaufer, Midgley, & Eccles, 1988; Harter et al., 1992; Roeser and Eccles, 1998; Seidman et al., 1994) provide empirical support for Eccles and Midgley's (1989, 1990) hypothesis that there is a mismatch between the developmental needs of early adolescents and the structure of middle schools.

Harter et al. (1992) conducted a longitudinal study of students undergoing a transition to middle school to determine if they were experiencing the changes in the school environment hypothesized by Eccles and Midgley (1989). They assessed 338 middle school students in grades six, seven, and eight on the measures of perceived competence, environmental change, motivational orientation, worry over school performance, and the importance of scholastic success. On the measure of environmental change students were asked to compare the environment in their current grade with the environment in their school last year.

Harter et al. (1992) found that the large majority of middle school students surveyed reported increasing focus on competition, grades, and evaluation with each new grade level. These same children reported more academic anxiety, decreased competence and motivation, and more extrinsic motivational orientation than their classmates who perceived their school environment as less performance focused.

Feldhaufer et al. (1988) examined the impact of transition to middle school on student and teacher perceptions of the classroom environment. They surveyed children and teachers from 117 sixth grade classrooms in elementary school and 138 seventh

grade classrooms in junior high school. Junior high school students reported decreased opportunities for interaction, input, and cooperation; increases in social comparison as a form of evaluation; the deterioration of student/teacher relationships; and less small group or individualized instruction than did their counterparts remaining in elementary school.

Similarly, in a study of 863 students from middle schools in New York, Washington, and Baltimore with high percentages of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, the transition from elementary school to middle school was associated with increases in the reported levels of daily hassles by students, declines in participation in extracurricular activities, and decreasing perceptions of support from school personnel. These findings were consistent for students regardless of race/ethnicity or gender (Seidman et al., 1994).

In a longitudinal study of 1046 students from 26 different middle schools, Roeser and Eccles (1998) examined the relationship between adolescent perceptions of their middle school and changes in academic and psychological adjustment. They found that students' perceptions significantly predicted both psychological and academic adjustment after controlling for the impact of prior adjustment, demographic variables, and ability level. An emphasis on individual effort and improvement in school and perceptions of positive regard by teachers were associated with increases in feelings of academic competence, academic values, and academic achievement as well as decreases in depressive symptoms, truancy, and anger. In contrast, perceptions of differential treatment based on ability and perception of competition were associated with declining

academic achievement and academic values and increases in depressive symptoms, truancy, and anger.

Declines Associated with the Transition to Middle School

Early adolescents face the task of navigating two major life transitions during the same critical time period. The challenges of navigating the difficult terrain of early adolescence are manifest in the declines associated with the transition to middle school. Declines in the areas of academic performance, self-perception, positive feelings about school, motivation, and connectedness will be discussed in the following pages.

Declines in academic performance

The most frequently discussed decline is academic performance. (Alspaugh, 1998; Blythe, Simmons, & Carlton, Ford, 1983; Crockett, Peterson, Graber, Schulenburger & Ebata, 1989; Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Felner, Primavera, & Cauce, 1981; Gronna, 1999; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Harter, 1981; Roeser & Eccles, 1998; Seidman et al., 1994; Zanobini & Usai, 2002). Declines in reading, math, science and social studies occurred regardless of whether the transition occurred in 5th, 6th, 7th or 8th grade   (Asplaugh & Harting, 1995). Not only do students show decreases in grade point average (GPA), but the magnitude of the decrease in grades was predictive of subsequent school failure and of dropping out of school (Simmons & Blythe, 1987).

Alspaugh (1998) examined achievement loss associated with the transition to middle school and high school. His sample included three groups of 16 school districts. One group of school districts had a structure of K-8th grades followed by 9th-12th grades. Another group had one K-5th school, one 6th-8th school, and one 9th-12th school. The final group had the same grade structure as the second group with the difference being

that students from multiple elementary schools merged into one middle school. He found that students from districts who made two transitions, one from elementary school to middle school and one from middle school to high school experienced significantly greater achievement loss than those who made only a transition from a K-8 school to high school. The losses associated with transition were larger when students from multiple elementary schools were combined into a single middle school during the transition. He also found that dropout rates were lower for districts that had a K-8 structure than for those with middle schools consisting of grades 6-8. Although Alspaugh's results lend support to the idea that the achievement loss is associated with changes in school structure, a limitation of the study is that he did not report on the equivalency of the school districts being compared.

Anderman and Midgley (1997) examined year-end grades across the transition to middle school. They compared fifth grade year-end grades of 341 elementary school children from a working class community with the grades of the same children after completion of their first year of middle school, sixth grade. They did not find that academic performance as measured by year-end grades declined for all students across the transition to middle school. High ability girls academic performance increased while the academic performance of low-ability girls and high-ability boys decreased. The researchers did not have enough diversity in their sample, 82 % white and 21% qualifying for free or reduced lunch, to allow for observations about the impact of poverty or ethnicity on changes in year-end grades across the transition to middle school.

Gutman and Midgley (2000) studied the impact of the transition to middle school on poor African-American students' grade point average in their core academic

classes. In contrast to the findings of Anderman and Midgley (1997), they found that grades significantly declined after the transition from fifth to sixth grade. The differences in the outcomes between the two studies may be attributable to the differences in the samples. The entirety of the sample from Gutman and Midgley (2000) study could be considered to be at-risk.

Zanobini and Usai (2002) studied the impact of the transition from primary to middle school on domain-specific academic achievement, self-concept, and motivation. The sample for the study was composed of low-middle socioeconomic status students from three different schools in Genoa, Italy.

Zanobini and Usai (2002) individually administered the Multi-dimensional Self-Concept Scale and the Academic Motivation Scale at the end of fifth grade and again in the middle of the sixth grade year. They also recorded final fifth and sixth grade school grades for participants. There was a significant difference (*alpha*=.001) in final grades between fifth and sixth grade grades. These results support the conclusions of prior researchers showing declines in GPA after the transition to middle school. They also found that school grades correlated significantly with academic self-concept and perceived competence, but not with intrinsic or extrinsic motivation.

A limit of using the Zanobini and Usai (2002) study to understand changes in American schools is that the environmental changes in American schools pointed out in the literature may be more pronounced than in Italian schools. Another limitation is that the measure of academic achievement, end of year grades, is somewhat subjective and in fact, different scales are used in different schools. Primary schools used a four-point scale while middle schools used a five-point scale.

Declines in self-perception

The transition to middle school was also associated with declines in self-esteem and self-concept (Blythe et al., 1983; Eccles, Midgley & Adler, 1984; Fenzel, 2000; Seidman et al., 1994; Wigfield & Eccles, 1994; Wigfield, Eccles, MacIver, Reuman, & Midgley, 1991; Zanobini & Usai, 2002) as well as perceived competence (Anderman, Maehr, & Midgley, 1999; Harter et al., 1992; Wigfield & Eccles, 1994).

Seidman et al. (1994) studied the effects of school transition between elementary school and middle school on the self-esteem of 580 poor Black, White, and Latino students from New York, Washington, and Baltimore. Data were collected in the year prior to and after the transition. Self-esteem declined significantly across race, ethnicity, and gender.

Wigfield and Eccles (1994) measured the self-esteem of 1850 students twice in their final year of elementary school and then twice in the year these same students transitioned to junior high school. Children's self-esteem remained constant in elementary school but significantly decreased after the transition to middle school.

Wigfield et al. (1991) also found declining self-esteem scores across the transition to middle school, but self-esteem scores rebounded in the year following the transition. In a more current study examining the relationships between global self-worth and strain during the transition to middle school, Fenzel (2000) found that the presence of social support from close friends enhanced feeling of students' self-worth across the transition to middle school.

Wigfield and Eccles (1994) examined the change in competency beliefs across the transition to junior high school. Participants were 1850 students from a low-to-middle

income community transitioning from sixth grade in an elementary school to seventh grade in a junior high school. Students filled out Harter's Perceived Competence Scale for Children twice in the sixth grade and twice in the seventh grade. Students' competence beliefs in the areas of English, mathematics, sports, and social became more negative across the transition. English and math competence continued to decline throughout seventh grade.

Anderman, Maehr, and Midgley (1999) found similar results in a study investigating the change in perceived academic competence across the transition to middle school for 341 students from working class community. Students completed the Patterns of Adaptive Learning survey that assessed competence in their English and mathematics classrooms both in the fifth grade before the transition to middle school and in the sixth grade after the transition to middle school. Perceived academic competence declined between fifth and sixth grades.

In the Zanobini and Usai (2002) study discussed in the academic declines section above, they found significant differences in the academic self-concept but not in other dimensions of self-concept such as social self-concept, competence self-concept, and physical self-concept. These findings contradict the findings of others that showed declines in perceived academic competence between fifth and sixth grades (Anderman, Maehr, & Midgley,1999; Harter et al., 1992; Wigfield & Eccles, 1994). It is possible that the different results seen in the various studies could be attributed to the use of different measures to assess complex constructs.

Declines in positive feelings about school

After the transition to middle school, students had increases in negative affective experiences about school (Brush, 1980; Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Harter et al., 1992; Levine, 1966; Wigfield et al., 1991). Transitioning students had more negative attitudes about school (Brush, 1980; Eccles et al., 1984), increased anxiety about school (Harter et al., 1992; Levine, 1966; Wigfield et al., 1991), and increased feelings of alienation and disconnection from school (Kulka et al., 1982). Not surprisingly, considering the more negative affective experiences of school after the transition to middle school, Kulka et al. (1982) also found decreases in school attendance after the transition to middle school.

Declines in motivation

In addition to more negative feelings about school, researchers have documented declining levels of motivation after the transition to middle school (Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Anderman, Maehr, & Midgley, 1999; Goodenow, 1993; Harter et al., 1992; Zanobini & Usai, 2002). Harter et al., 1992 found that intrinsic motivation decreased across the transition to middle school particularly for those students who perceived themselves to have low levels of academic confidence.

In a study by Anderman, Maehr, and Midgley (1999), students transitioning to middle school showed declines in motivation, across the transition to middle school. Motivation was assessed by the levels of personal performance goals and personal extrinsic goals after the transition. The unique finding from this study is that students who moved to schools that had more task-focused instructional practices had significantly fewer declines than those students who attended schools with more performance-based instructional practices.

Zanobini and Usai (2002) used the Academic Motivation Scale to assess the intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation of 92 lower middle class students from Genoa, Italy at the end of fifth grade and during the middle of the sixth grade. They found significant declines in intrinsic motivation but not in extrinsic motivation or amotivation.

In a correlational study, Goodenow (1993) examined the influence of support and belonging in the classroom on academic motivation, achievement, and effort of early adolescents. Participants for the study included 353 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. Belonging was associated with the two motivational variables of expectancies and values and also influenced academic effort as judged by teachers and achievement as measured by course grades. Belonging and support and measured by the Class Belonging and Support Scale explained more than one third of the variance in participants' expectations for success in the academic class that was under investigation.

Declines in connectedness

Finally, the transition to middle school is associated with the disruption of social networks (Berndt, 1989) and increases in feelings of alienation (Kulka et al., 1982) and anonymity (Blyth et al., 1983). Blythe et al. (1983) conducted a five-year longitudinal study in which they followed adolescents from sixth through tenth grade. They found that the level of perceived anonymity increased significantly and involvement in extracurricular activities decreased significantly during the transition years to both junior high school and high school. The decreases were more dramatic during the transition to junior high school.

Seidman et al. (1994) in their study of the impact of school transition on early adolescents also found that participation in extracurricular activities and perceived social support declined after the transition to middle school. Although daily hassles with peers decreased significantly after the transition to middle school, peer values became more non-conforming.

Increases in bullying, dominance, and victimization

Pellegrini and Long (2002) conducted a longitudinal study that looked at the incidence bullying, victimization, dominance, and peer relationships over the transition to middle school. The participants in the study were sampled from fifth grade students in a rural bedroom community of a large urban city. The sample was 95% European American and primarily middle class. Data was collected in fifth, sixth, and seventh grades. The sample size after attrition was 129 students. Data collected included direct observations, self-reports, peer nominations, teacher measures, and diaries of bullying aggression and victimization. Data was collected across the entire school day.

Bullying and aggression increased with the transition to middle school and then declined. Pellegrini and Long (2002) theorize that bullying may be one way in which early adolescents renegotiate their status as they form new social groups. Victimization and peer affiliation decreased across the transition. Peer affiliation appeared to buffer victimization.

<div align="center">Adolescents At-Risk for Poor Transitions</div>

At-risk Students

Some students are more vulnerable during the transition to middle school. Students who experience high levels of stress are at greater risk of poor transitions. High levels of stress may be a result of chronic daily stress (Felner & Felner, 1989), the

confluence of multiple stressors (Isakson & Jarvis, 1998; Rudolph et al., 2001; Seidman et al., 1994), or of stress associated with major life transitions such as death in the family, divorce, remarriage, early dating, or geographic mobility (Blythe, Simmons, & Carlton-Ford, 1983).

Poor urban youth experiencing a greater number of environmental stressors (Seidman et al., 1994), students who are least academically capable (McLoyd, 1998), overage students, minority students, and students with high mobility (U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1975) are particularly at-risk. Students who feel alienated (Kulka et al., 1982), rejected by their peers (Parker & Asher, 1987), or lack adequate levels of social support (Isakson & Jarvis, 1998) are also at greater risk.

Overage Students

The population for this study will be sixth grade students who are overage for their grade and new to the middle school. Students who are retained in a grade somewhere between kindergarten and eighth grade have less positive academic as well as emotional and behavioral outcomes when compared with their non-retained peers (Holmes & Saturday, 2000; Meisels & Liaw, 1993). Retained students demonstrate lower grades and test scores (Holmes & Saturday, 2000; Meisels & Liaw, 1993), higher rates of placement in special education programs, more emotional and behavioral problems (Meisels & Liaw, 1993), more disconnection from school, poorer self-esteem, are more rejected by peers and are less well adjusted in general (Holmes & Saturday, 2000) than there non-retained peers. Minority students, students of low SES, and males are retained in significantly higher proportions than white, higher SES, and female students (Meisels & Law, 1993).

Although dropping out of school can be attributed to a host of individual, family, and school related factors (Rumberger, 1998), grade retention is the strongest predictor of dropping out of school (Holmes & Saturday, 2000; Jimerson, Anderson, & Whipple, 2002). Students who have been retained are 11 times more likely to drop out of school than those who have not been retained (Holmes & Saturday, 2000). Dropping out of school has been theorized to be the final step in a cumulative process of withdrawal (Newman et al., 1992; Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989) and disengagement from school (Finn, 1989).

Factors Related to School Success of At-risk Students

School Bonding

Bonding to school is an important protective factor for early adolescents (Hawkins & Weiss, 1985). The components of school bonding are social ties to others in the school, involvement in school activities, commitment to the school, and beliefs in the value of the school. Low levels of attachment and bonding to school are associated with the development of juvenile delinquency (Cernkovich & Giordano, 1992). Increased levels of bonding to school are linked to higher grades (Cernkovich & Giordano, 1992; Morrison, Robertson, Laurie, & Kelly, 1997) increased school involvement (Cernkovich & Giordano,1992), decreased disruptive school behavior (Morrison et al., 1997), and higher educational aspirations (Cernkovich & Giordano,1992).

Disengagement from school often manifests itself in absenteeism (Jordan, Lara, & McPhartland, 1994), negative attitudes toward school (Beatty et al., 2001), moving from school to school (Beatty et al., 2001; Rumberger, 1998), disruptive behavior (Jordan et al., 1994; Beatty et al., 2001), and lack of academic effort (Beatty et al., 2001).

In the model proposed by Wehlage et al. (1989), dropping out of school is influenced by social bonding to the school. Wehlage et al. (1989) suggest in their theory that in order for disadvantaged students to remain in school and achieve academically they need additional resources and support to improve school bonding.

One critical element of school bonding that is predictive of successful school transitions is social and emotional support from peers (Bernt, 1999; Bernt & Hawkins, 1988; Bogat Jones, & Jason, 1980; Felner, Ginter, & Primavera, 1982; Goodenow & Grady, 1994; Hirsh & DuBois, 1992; Miller, 1983). Peers can provide emotional support, identity validation and problem-solving resources that can help students cope with the transition to middle school (Bogat et al., 1980; Felner et al., 1982).

In a prospective analysis by Hirsh and DuBois (1992), peer support was associated with adolescent mental health. Close peer ties during the first semester of junior high school were predictive of classroom adjustment during the second semester of junior high school (Bernt & Hawkins, 1988). In a study by Goodenow & Grady (1994), a sense of school belonging was significantly associated with engagement and school motivation of low-income African-American and Hispanic early adolescents.

Although the transition middle school is a time when students could most benefit from peer support and bonding to the school, it is also a time when they have yet to develop a network of social support and when they are more likely to feel alienated from the school. Finding a social niche is complicated by the large size of middle schools (Harter et al., 1992). The disconnection from peers and the school can have detrimental effects on general interest in school and on self-esteem (Miller, 1983).

Attitude Toward School

Attitude toward school is a student's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings about school including his or her attitudes toward school, teachers, and interpersonal relationships with teachers, peers, and self. Attitudes in general are defined as a tendency of a person to act in a particular way in a particular situation (Mager, 1968). Attitudes consist of both direction and intensity (Damico, Hines, & Northrop, 1975). For example, the direction could be either positive or negative, and the intensity strong or weak. A student may have a favorable attitude toward his math teacher. If the intensity of the attitude is strong, students may be willing to spend extra time each night reviewing their math assignments so that there are no mistakes when they turn in their homework. If students have negative but strong attitudes toward a teacher, they may be more likely to skip class or fail to turn in assignments.

Positive attitudes towards school are associated with pupil growth, academic achievement, cooperation, and positive school climate. In contrast, negative attitudes toward school are associated with disruptive behavior, increased school absenteeism, vandalism, and lack of academic achievement (Damico, Hines, & Northrop, 1975). Purkey (1999) believed that all student behavior is significantly affected by student attitude.

In several longitudinal studies reviewing student attitudes (Hedelin & Sjoberg, 1985; Lounsbury, 1984) the largest drops in student attitudes occurred between fifth and seventh grades. In a longitudinal study of 1046 students in 23 middle schools (Roeser & Eccles, 1998), students' perceptions of their schools were significant predictors of their academic and psychological adjustment at the end of eighth grade after accounting for the

influence of prior academic achievement, demographic characteristics, and prior adjustment. Students' positive attitudes toward their teachers were associated with academic achievement, decreases in depressive symptoms, truancy, and anger.

Although using student attitude assessments to measure of effectiveness of educational and counseling interventions is common, their use is not without problems. The relationship between attitudes and behavior is inconsistent. Attitude scales are prone to errors due to students responding in what they believe are socially desirable ways. To guard against this limitation, attitude scales are best used in conjunction with other direct assessments of behavior such as school attendance.

School Attendance

School attendance is an important factor in student success. Regular school attendance has been associated with academic achievement, more positive attitudes toward school, better school adjustment, and fewer behavior problems (Department of Education, 1996; Roeser & Eccles, 1998).

Wasik (1989) studied the relationship between school attendance and reading and math performance. He found that regular school attendance was significantly related to higher reading and math achievement test scores.

In contrast, high absenteeism from school has been linked to increased dropout rates, student drug use, violence at school, underdeveloped intellectual abilities, and juvenile delinquency (Finn, 1989; Rumberger, 1998). Missing school regularly is one of the first signs that a child is in trouble. High absenteeism is considered by many to be a gateway to crime (Department of Education, 1996).

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a person's initiative and persistence in the face of adversity based on their beliefs in their own capacity to exert control over the demands of the environment and their functioning (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is an indicator of the amount of effort a person will expend in completing a task, their endurance and perseverance when confronted with challenges, and their resilience in adverse situations (Pajares, 1996).

Self-efficacy plays an important role in determining academic success (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Schunk, 1984; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Not only is self-efficacy associated with academic achievement, but also it is also associated with components of school engagement such as effort, persistence, and intrinsic interest in school (Schunk, 1984; Zimmerman et al., 1992).

Bandura (1977) discussed four sources that can lead to changes in self-efficacy: (1) performance accomplishment (2) vicarious experiences (3) verbal persuasion and (4) emotional arousal. Each of the first three sources will be defined and then applied to ABC.

Performance accomplishments are defined as a person's past experiences of success and failure. Success increases self-efficacy whereas failure decreases self-efficacy. Performance accomplishments are the most powerful method of changing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). ABC is designed to give students opportunities to successfully complete activities that they believe are beyond their abilities. Bandura (1977) suggests that an individual's self-efficacy will be increased if they are successful at completing activities that are subjectively threatening. These gains in self-efficacy may be

generalizable when connections are drawn between activities and real life situations. In ABC, the processing or debriefing period is used to aid students in making connections between the adventure-based activity and their academic work.

Vicarious experiences are experiences in which a person observes another mastering a difficult task without negative outcomes. In ABC, students observe other students in the group completing challenging tasks. The more similar the students are the more impact vicarious experience will have on changing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy can also be improved by verbal persuasion. Although verbal persuasion is the least effective way to impact self-efficacy, when combined with other experiences it can be effective (Bandura, 1977). In ABC, course instructors and group members persuade students that they can be successful at completing initiatives that, at first appear to be impossible.

Interventions to Improve the Transition to Middle School

Although research has demonstrated that the transition to middle school can be a difficult life transition for many students with long term impact, there is a paucity of information about interventions designed to help students transition to middle school. In the review of ten journals over the past five years, the author found only two studies describing transition programs (Baird, 1997; Smith, 1997), and only one of these studies was an empirical study (Smith, 1997). The journals reviewed by the author include *Professional School Counseling*, the *Journal of Counseling and Development*, the *Journal of Early Adolescence*, the *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, the *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *Journal of Educational Research*, the *Review of Educational Research*, the *Middle School Journal*, the *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, and the

Journal of Community Psychology. The search resulted in a very limited number of studies (Allan & McKean, 1984; Baird, 1997; Cornille, Bayer, & Smyth, 1983; Holland-Jacobson, Holland, & Cook, 1984; Reyes, Gillock, & Kobus, 1994; Smith, 1997). These studies are discussed below.

The oldest study found by the researcher was Cornille, Bayer, and Smyth (1983) who conducted a national survey on the needs of newcomers and the programs their schools were providing for these students. Approximately 85% of the respondents were school counselors or psychologists. The most common needs reported by respondents were needs related to peer interactions such as, developing a sense of belonging in the school community, getting acquainted with other students, and making new friends.

The most common services reported for newcomers were administrative in nature. For example, 100% of schools responded that they provided services such as collecting past school records, providing nametags for new students, providing a handbook on school policies, providing a map of the school, providing placement testing, providing a catalogue of curriculum offerings, and providing names of new students to teachers (Cornille et al., 1983).

Schools reported three types of specialized programs for new students: buddy systems, fall orientations, and orientations scheduled later in the year. Buddy systems ranged from impromptu pairing of newcomers with students who happened to be available for a quick tour of the school to more elaborate programs in which peer helpers were trained to work with new students over a period of time. Some schools offered buddy programs sponsored by student organizations such as the student council. Other

variations included pairing a new student and older student to have lunch together or the formation of welcoming clubs for new students (Cornille et al., 1983).

Little information was provided about orientation programs other than the types of information that were provided for students and/or their parents. A few schools reported offering a short series of group meetings for new students or a party or dance in which new students were the honorees (Cornille et al., 1983).

In one of the more recent articles, Baird (1997) briefly described two orientation programs, one for foreign-speaking students and one for English-speaking students. The orientations were similar in nature to the ones described by Cornille et al. (1983). For foreign-speaking students, the orientation included working with English as a Second Language teachers, placement testing, a tour of the school, and the completion of an orientation check-list. The orientation for students who speak English also included pairing them with an older student who serves as their guide for the day and an interview with the counselor approximately two weeks after entering the school (Baird, 1997).

Holland-Jacobson, Holland, and Cook (1984) made several suggestions in order to help ease the transition for new students. They suggested providing information to teachers about how to help students adapt to a new environment, conducting "get to know the school nights" for parents and students, providing remedial tutoring, setting up buddy systems, and setting up periodic meetings with new students.

Allan and McKean (1984) described one of the more comprehensive programs found in the literature. Their orientation program involved three visits to the feeder elementary schools towards the end of the school year. In the first meeting, the counselor met with students and showed slides of the new school, talked about student life at the

junior high school, and answered student questions. In the second meeting, students were given course request forms and handbooks. The counselor also talked with the students about changing academic expectations such as increased amounts of homework and new teacher demands. In the final session at the elementary school, the counselor introduced students to the extracurricular opportunities available and answered questions. The orientation program also included an orientation tour led by former students from the elementary school, a parent night, a buddy system for students new to the community, and counselor and nurse visitations to the classrooms of all new students during the first weeks of school. The counselor also met with teachers to discuss students who might need special assistance during the transition.

In addition, counselors met with students to discuss with them how the transition to middle school might be improved. From this information, counselors worked with students to develop interventions. A couple of the most significant issues raised by students included harassment from older students and unfounded rumors about the school. After adding new elements to the transition program to address these issues, the transition time was reduced from 3 months in the previous years to less than one week (Allan & McKean, 1984).

Although Allan and McKean (1984) did evaluate the impact of the transition program, few details were given about how the evaluation was conducted. For example, they mention that the transition period was reduced from three months to one week, but they give no indication about how baseline data was collected. Although it is not clear from their study, presumably, the assessment they used consisted of only one Likert-style

question about the length of time period needed to adjust and an area for written comments about the transition.

In the review of the literature, the author found two empirical studies that evaluated the impact of transition programs. Both of these studies were concerned with the transition to high school. Smith (1997) examined the impact of a middle school transition program on student performance and high school retention, after controlling for student demographics, family characteristics, and student behavior. She compared student outcomes based on the level of transition program that existed at the school where the student attended. She classified schools as either having no transition program, a partial transition program, or a full transition program. Full transition programs addressed the needs of students, parents, and staff whereas partial transition program did not include all of these elements.

Smith (1997) found that programs with a full transition program were significantly more effective than those with either partial or no transition programs. The study also concluded that programs in which only one element was involved were ineffective in improving student performance or retention.

Although the evaluation by Smith (1997) is much more rigorous than any previous evaluations of transition programs, there are many methodological limitations to the study. The study provides little information about the transition programs being compared. For example, the study omitted important information such as who provided the data about transition programs, what percentage of students, parents, or staff participated in the transition programs, what were the duration of programs, and what were the activities included in the programs. Also, no information was given about the

equivalency of schools being compared. One of the major limitations is that the majority of students on whom data was being compared may not have participated in the transition programs at their schools.

The only study of transition programs for at-risk students was a study by Reyes, Gillock, and Kobus (1994). This study described a transition program designed to prepare urban, minority eighth graders for transition to high school the following year. The study compared two groups of predominantly Hispanic students. One group received an education component that consisted of an interactive, one-day workshop in which students received information about the new school and were allowed to discuss their concerns about the transition.

The second group also received the educational component but in addition received a peer support component in which they were paired with trained peer facilitators who participated with them in four activities at the high school including a tour, a welcome party, a baseball game, and a culminating activity. No group differences were found on measures of school adjustment, self-perceptions, or perceived levels of social support from home or school. However, both groups showed improved perceptions of school readiness. The study was limited in that it did not utilize a control group. Also, the lack of group differences may have been due to a lack of power due to a small sample size.

In summary, few interventions for assisting students' transition to middle school are found in the literature and none of the programs described for middle schoolers are empirical. The majority of articles on transition programs are very limited in detail (Baird, 1997; Holland & Jacobson, 1984) and/or are dated (Allan & McKean, 1984;

Holland & Jacobson, 1984). Although there are two empirical studies examining the effectiveness of transition programs to high school, neither discuss the transition to middle school and both have serious methodological limitations (Smith, 1997; Reyes et al., 1994). Only one study focused on at-risk students (Reyes et al., 1994), and no study focused on the transition of overage students.

Adventure-based Counseling (ABC)

This section reviews the literature on adventure-programming beginning with its early history and proceeding to its present day applications in schools. The review includes a description of two of the more popular and influential adventure programs, Outward Bound and Project Adventure. It then goes on to discuss classification systems, key elements, goals, and examples of ABC. The section concludes with a review of the research on the effectiveness of ABC.

Early History of Adventure Programming

Adventure programming is a form of experiential education in which direct experience is followed by reflection. The earliest history of adventure programming can be traced to early experiential educators such as Comenius (1592-1670), Rosseau (1712-1778), and Pestalozzi (1746-1827). Comenius focused on the use of the five senses during learning. He believed that children should experience an item first and only afterwards learn about the item. Rosseau was known for using the principles of nature to teach students. Pestalozzi focused on teaching children practical skills first. He believed that after children have learned skills they would be more capable of developing and understanding the underlying generalizations and principles based on the skills they had learned (Raiola & O'Keefe, 1999).

Outward Bound

Kurt Hahn (1886-1974) is considered the grandfather of adventure programming. During World War II, he became distressed by the fact that young, fit British sailors were dying at a faster rate than older, less fit sailors. In 1941, he developed a program to prepare young men to become soldiers by improving their attitudes, increasing their self-confidence, and improving their ability to work as part of a team. Typical activities included in his program were search and rescue training, mountain expeditions, obstacle courses, and community service (Priest & Gass, 1997).

After the war, the program continued to grow and focused on training young people in the areas of fitness, initiative, imagination, skill, self-discipline, and compassion (Richards, 1999). Today Outward Bound runs 41 centers in 24 countries (Outward Bound International, 1994).

The goals of today's Outward Bound are to help participants recognize their abilities, increase self-confidence, recognize the importance of personal responsibility, work more effectively with other people, increase pro-social values, and improve their leadership abilities. Typically, groups of eight to twelve people participate in a month long survival skills training which includes short and long expeditions into a wilderness setting as well as solo experiences. Participants utilize group problem-solving and communication skills to work past their perceived limits (Green & Thompson, 1990). Outward Bound has focused on working with troubled at-risk youth since its inception in the United States in 1962. In fact, most of the research on the effectiveness of Outward Bound has focused on programs designed for at-risk youth (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1994).

Project Adventure

In 1971, Jerry Pieh, the principal of Hamilton-Wenham Junior-Senior High School in Hamilton, Massachusetts, along with his colleague Gary Baker wrote a proposal to the Federal Office of Education to integrate Outward Bound concepts into the public schools. The three-year program was called Project Adventure. Teachers and counselors were trained to provide Outward Bound instruction twice a week for 45 minutes as part of the physical education curriculum. In addition, Outward Bound concepts were reinforced in English, history, science, theatre arts, and counseling curriculums. All tenth graders participated in the year-long course (Prouty, 1999).

Project Adventure focused primarily on low-level initiatives that could be completed on school grounds. The sequence of activities included warm-ups, trust-building exercises, problem-solving initiatives, and low and high ropes course elements. In addition students participated in service projects and two to three day camping trips. In 1974, Project Adventure became a National Demonstration School and part of the National Diffusion Network Model. The Federal Office of Education gives these awards to excellent programs that have undergone rigorous program evaluations. By 1980, 400 schools had adopted the Project Adventure model (Prouty, 1999).

The Classification of Adventure-based Programming

The complex conceptual history of adventure-programming is illustrated by the variety of names by which it has been called (Miles & Priest, 1999). Some of the terms used to describe adventure programming include challenge education (Halliday, 1999), challenge course (White, 1997), outdoor recreation (Green, 2000), ropes and challenge course (Meyer, 2000), wilderness therapy (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1994; Sachs &

Miller, 1992), outdoor adventure program (Cason & Gillis, 1994; Cross, 1998),

adventure-based activities (Moote & Wodarski, 1997), adventure-based education (Gillis

& Simpson, 1991; Glass & Shoffner, 2001; Sibthorp, 2000), adventure therapy (Gass,

1993; Wick, Wick, & Peterson, 1997), and ABC (Combs, 2001; Leiberman & Devos,

1982; Maizell, 1988; Nassar-McMillan & Cashwell, 1997; Schoel et al., 1988). Gillis

(1992) described the field as being plagued by definition problems.

    Two classification systems have been developed that help to clarify the

relationships between different types of adventure programming. The first classification

system is based on the purpose of adventure programming. Programs are classified as

either recreational, educational/developmental, or therapeutic. The purpose of

recreational programs is to learn new activities, have fun, and become reenergized. An

example of a recreational program is learning how to rock climb (Priest & Gass, 1997).

The purpose of educational/developmental programs is to increase knowledge and to

teach broad life skills such as cooperation, decision-making, or communication skills

(Priest & Gass, 1997). Developmental programs are preventive in nature. Therapeutic

programs focus on challenging dysfunctional behavior patterns of participants already

identified with specific problems (Priest & Gass, 1997).

    The second classification system is based on the setting and intensity of the

program. The classifications are long-term residential camping programs, wilderness

therapy, and adventure therapy. Long-term residential camping programs occur over

extended periods of time usually one year. In these programs, clients learn to meet their

basic needs in order to survive. In wilderness therapy, participants are placed in a remote

setting for approximately one month. Most Outward Bound programs are examples of

wilderness therapy. Adventure therapy, the third category, developed out of wilderness therapy. The primary difference between adventure therapy and wilderness therapy is that adventure therapy is conducted in non-wilderness settings such as schools or hospitals over a period of several weeks for short periods of time. Project Adventure is a good example of adventure therapy (Gass, 1993). ABC as an intervention for transitioning students can be classified as an educational/developmental program under the first classification system or an adventure therapy program under the second system.

For the purposes of this study ABC is defined as a counseling approach that utilizes structured learning experiences in which participants are presented with a series of novel, non-competitive tasks of increasing difficulty that depend on group interaction, trust, communication, decision-making and problem-solving skills in order to complete. Experiential activities are followed by a processing period. During the processing period participants share what they have learned from the activities and how they might apply what they have learned to other areas of their lives.

Key Elements of ABC

Good ABC programs have the following characteristics:

- A sense of drama, suspense, fun, and adventure. This sense of drama can be created because of the setting or because the counselor creates a sense of anticipation through the use of stories and/or humor (Prouty, 1999). The excitement created by engaging activities helps to increase learning (Priest & Gass, 1997).

- High expectations for participation and achieving of individual and group goals. ABC has a success orientation which focuses on what students have done right (Prouty, 1999).

- Mutual support. Participants learn to support and care for each other through encouragement following the example of the group facilitator (Prouty, 1999).

- Utilizes group problem solving. The problems that are presented cannot be solved individually but require group effort. The focus is on rewarding the group for success rather than the individual (Prouty, 1999).

- Holism. ABC utilizes cognitive, affective, and physical learning to accommodate participants with a variety of learning styles (Priest & Gass, 1997; Prouty, 1999).

- Use of metaphor. The skills required for completion of ABC activities are the same skills that are required for success in life. Participants are challenged to apply what they have learned to real life scenarios (Priest & Gass, 1997).

- Utilization of direct experience. ABC combines hands-on learning with personal and group reflection. Adventure-based activities often create teachable moments (Priest & Gass, 1997; Prouty, 1999).

- Organization and structure. The limitations and expectations of the activities are clearly stated. The structure of the activities creates an environment in which participants can experiment with new behaviors and make mistakes. Challenges are sequenced to increase in difficulty as the group learns to cooperate (Priest & Gass, 1997; Prouty, 1999).

- Processing/debriefing is used to assist group members process thoughts feelings and emotions associated with the concrete activity. Process questions help participants reflect on what happened during the activity, illuminate group strengths, share perceptions, and transfer learning to other settings (Glass & Shoffner, 2001).

Goals of ABC

The specific goals of ABC are based upon the needs of the particular group or

individuals within the group. Although goals can be personalized in ABC, there are some

broad goals for all ABC. The most commonly stated goal of ABC is the improvement of

the self-concept/self-esteem of group members (Glass & Shoffner, 2001; Halliday, 1999;

Moote & Wodarski, 1997; Nassar-McMillan & Cashwell, 1997; Schoel et al., 1988).

Other goals of ABC include improving the capacity to trust, communication skills,

cooperation, decision-making skills, and problem-solving skills (Moote & Wodarski,

1997; Nassar-McMillan & Cashwell, 1997). Halliday (1999) also includes as goals of

increasing a sense of belonging, recognizing the uniqueness, and increasing the self-

efficacy or perceived competence of group members. Perhaps one of the most relevant goals of ABC for students undergoing a transition to a new school is the development of group cohesion (Glass & Shoffner, 2001; Meyer, 2000).

Examples of ABC Activities

Within ABC there are several different activities that are sequenced in a particular manner in order to obtain the goals discussed in the previous section. Activities can be broken down into four categories: lead up activities, initiatives, ropes course low elements, and ropes course high elements. Lead-up activities are designed to practice skills needed in more difficult activities. In the category of lead-up activities there are three subcategories: icebreakers, deinhibitizers, and trust and empathy activities. Icebreakers are activities that help group members get acquainted and breakdown initial barriers. Deinhibitizers assist group members in beginning to take risks in a safe and cooperative environment. Trust and empathy activities teach safety skills and develop trust and empathy between group members (Combs, 2001).

Initiatives are activities requiring a group problem-solving process in order to complete. In initiatives, the group leader presents the problem to the group and then backs off and lets group members solve the problem with little or no assistance. The solving of the problem by the group without assistance helps to create a sense of group empowerment (Combs, 2001).

Ropes courses are obstacles constructed of rope and cable that are designed to promote individual achievement and group cooperation. The low elements of the ropes course are ropes course activities that are completed close to the ground and do not require a belay system. The high elements of a ropes course are high above the ground

and require a belay system (Combs, 2001). ABC tends to focus on lead-up activities, initiatives, and the low elements of the ropes course. Examples of each type of activity are included below.

In Peek-a-Who, the participants are divided into two teams. All participants introduce themselves to the group in a go around. One person from each team agrees to be the blanket holder for their team. The two blanket holders hold the blanket vertically with arms extended so that a shield is created between the two teams. Each team sends one team member to sit in front of the blanket. When the blanket is dropped, the group members sitting in front of the blanket must identify each other by name. The last to identify the other person moves over to the winner's team. The process is continued until one team has all the members. For groups that already know each other's names, some other means can be used to identify group members such as their favorite flavor of ice cream (Rhone, 1989).

In the activity Shuffle Your Buns, the set up is the same as the set up for musical chairs, a circle of chairs facing inwards with one less chair than number of group members. The group leader stands in the center of the circle with one of the group members. The member in the center asks a question beginning with "have you ever….." If the group leader deems it necessary he or she can screen the questions that group members ask to the group. After the question is asked, such as have you ever slept in a tent? Each group member who has done this activity along with the person who posed the question must find a new chair. The member without a chair then comes to the center of the circle to pose a question to the group (Rhonke, 1989). Possible processing questions: What were some surprising things that you discovered about other group members? What

did all group members have in common? What did it feel like when you were one of the only members to move after a question was asked?

In the activity Willow-in-the-wind, 10-15 people stand in a circle shoulder-to-shoulder. One person stands rigidly in the middle of the circle and falls to one side of the circle. Before the person falls far the group members gently push the person in another direction. The sequence continues until the person being pushed seems relaxed and the group has gained confidence in their ability to work together. All group members who want to take a turn being in the middle (Rhonke, 1989). Possible processing questions: What was the experience like in the center of the circle? In the outside circle? What needed to happen for you in order for you to trust the members of the group?

The problem in the activity, The Straw that Broke the Bottle's Back, is to pick up a twelve-ounce glass bottle with a plastic straw. In order to successfully complete this challenge the bottle must remain off the ground for at least five seconds. No other props are allowed, and the straw cannot be tied in a knot. The solution to this initiative is to bend the straw approximately two thirds of the way down. After bending the straw, place the straw into the bottle so that the bent part of the straw partially opens and pushes against the side of the bottle. Lift the straw and the bottle follows (Rhonke, 1991). Possible process questions: How did the group come up with the plan? How many attempts did you try before you came up with the idea that worked? What are some other areas of your life where you could use the planning skills you demonstrated here?

Another popular ABC activity called Electric Fence requires some set up. A rope or nylon cord is tied in a triangular configuration about four to five feet off the ground

between trees or posts 10-15 feet apart. Group members stand inside the "electrified fence" and are given an eight-foot plank to assist them.

The challenge is to transport team members across the wire using only the beam and themselves. If a group member touches the wire while crossing he or she and any person touching that person is dead and must return to the center and attempt to cross again. If the beam touches the wire, anyone touching the beam is dead. An "electric field" runs from the ground to the wire so group members must pass over the wire to get out. The trees or support are also charged and cannot be touched during the process. No diving or throwing of group members is allowed (Rhonke, 1977).

Possible process questions: What obstacles did the group have to overcome to reach their goal? What are some of the obstacles that you face in your new school? What skills did the group utilize to complete the activity?

Research on the Effectiveness of ABC in a School Setting

Teachers and Support Staff Intervene

Several authors have recommended that ABC be applied in school settings (Glass & Shoffner, 2001; Halliday, 1999; Nassar-McMillan & Cashwell, 1997). Glass and Shoffner (2001) and Nassar-McMillan & Cashwell (1997) describe a series of low-level initiatives that can easily be implemented by school counselors in school settings. Although the arguments for applications in school are appealing at an intuitive level, much research needs to be done to document the effectiveness of ABC in schools.

This section reviews the research on the effectiveness ABC in a school setting. The review does not include studies whose primary setting is away from school grounds. In a review of the literature, the researcher found only four empirical studies on the

effectiveness of ABC interventions in a school setting (Davidson, 1987; Leiberman & De Vos, 1982; Maizell, 1988; Wick et al., 1997). Each of these studies will be described in fuller detail in the following paragraphs.

One of the first studies of ABC in schools was a program evaluation of Project Adventure conducted by Leiberman and De Vos (1982). Project Adventure received a grant from the Massachusetts State Department of Education for curriculum development of ABC. A requirement of the grant involved studying the impact of ABC on the self-esteem of at-risk adolescents.

Participants in the study were 190 special education students with behavioral and adjustment disorders. One-hundred and twelve of these students were students in grades six through ten, and the remaining 78 students were in grades three though five. Parents enrolled their children in the ABC program on a voluntary basis (Leiberman & De Vos, 1982).

The design for the study was a pre-post control group design. Sixth through tenth graders were assessed using the Tennessee Self-concept scale and the Student Attitude Inventory. The students in grades three through five were assessed using the Piers-Harris Children's Self-concept Scale. Students participated in the ABC intervention for one academic year. The evaluation report did not include information about the activities included, the characteristics of the group facilitators, or the frequency or duration of ABC sessions. Results from the study indicate significant improvement in the self-esteem and attitudes toward school for the older students. No significant changes were reported for the third through fifth graders on self-concept except on the anxiety scale in which there were significant declines (Leiberman & De Vos, 1982).

Although the results lend preliminary support for the use of ABC with at-risk students in schools, methodological problems limit the usefulness of the findings. Some of the limitations include non-random assignment to groups, no information about the equivalency of control and treatment groups, and a lack of detailed information about the intervention. Also, the length of the intervention, one year, is also much longer than the length of the guidance unit in the proposed study.

Maizell (1988) studied the impact of an ABC intervention on 31, 13-17 year-old adjudicated youth attending two public schools. Nineteen of the students participated in one of two experimental groups (n=9 and n=10). All students in the experimental groups were from the same school. The remainder of the students (n=12) attended the second school and participated in the control group.

The intervention consisted of nine, three-hour sessions conducted on school grounds. The activities were ABC initiatives designed to address the clinical issues of group members. Initiatives increased in difficulty throughout the intervention. The intervention culminated with a two-day white-water rafting and back packing trip. The facilitators for the intervention were two to three school staff members with master's degrees in special education, school psychology, and counseling. All of the facilitators were trained by Project Adventure staff in basic and advanced levels of ABC (Maizell, 1988).

Maizell (1988) assessed students using the Tennessee Self-concept Scale (TSCS) and the Battle Culture-free Self-esteem Inventory (BCSI). He also collected attendance, GPA, and disciplinary data on each of the participants Students were assessed at three points in time, before, after, and one year following the intervention. In addition, parents

completed the Child Behavior Checklist (CBC) and researchers conducted semi-structured interviews for students in the experimental groups. Qualitative assessments included verbal self-reports using Experiential Rating Sheets and individual and group progress notes.

The findings included significant improvements in physical, moral, and social self-concept on the TSCS for experimental groups when compared to the control group. Results from the qualitative assessments were in concordance with quantitative results. Maizell (1988) found no differences on the BCSI, attendance, GPA, or disciplinary data between control and treatment groups. At the one-year follow-up, significant improvements between pretest levels and post test levels were found for all measures except attendance. Results on the CBC were not included in the reporting of results (Maizell, 1988).

This study, like the Leiberman and De Vos (1982) study, lends preliminary support for the use of ABC with at-risk students in a school setting, but again, the usefulness of the results in limited by weaknesses in the methodology. Limitations include a small sample size, lack of random assignment to groups, and non-equivalent groups. The design was also changed in mid-course due to attrition. The original design called for one experimental group and one control group at each school with experimental groups completing the intervention during the same time period. In actuality, experimental groups completed the intervention at different times allowing for the possibility of effects due to history rather than the intervention (Maizell, 1988).

The intervention described is unrealistic for many school counselors and much different than the guidance unit in the proposed study. Few counselors have three hours a

week to devote to a small group of students over the course of ten weeks. Also, the white water and back packing trip would be unaffordable and too risky for many schools.

School Counselors Intervene

Several authors have suggested ABC as a promising intervention for school counselors (Glass & Shoffner, 2001; Nassar-McMillan & Cashwell, 1997). Nassar-McMillan and Cashwell (1997) suggest that ABC can help students learn new coping skills, create success experiences, and improve self-esteem. The characteristics of ABC and its effectiveness with at-risk populations in other settings make it appealing as an intervention for school counselors working with transitioning students. In addition, school counselors are already trained in facilitating small groups with students, and can be easily trained to facilitate ABC activities (Myrick, 1994). While initial results of ABC studies in schools are promising, the empirical documentation of its effectiveness is in the beginning stages. Two studies documenting the effectiveness of school counselors using ABC are detailed in the following paragraphs (Davidson, 1987; Wick et al., 1997).

Davidson (1987) examined the impact of an Adventure Group School Counseling Program on underachieving high school students. Teachers identified twenty underachieving students. Half of these students were placed in an experimental group and half in a control group.

The intervention consisted of ten weekly sessions. The first seven sessions were 45- minute sessions conducted on school grounds. The sessions consisted of ABC initiatives, search and rescue training, and debriefing. The final three sessions included ropes course low and high elements and were conducted off campus. The duration of the

final three sessions ranged from one and one half to six hours per session (Davidson, 1987).

The design of the study was a pre-post control group design. Students were assessed using the Tennessee Self-concept Scale, the Selman Interpersonal Awareness Scale, the Locus of Control Scale, school attendance, and detention records. Qualitative measures were also used to assess the changes in the stages of team development (Davidson, 1987).

Results of the study included significant improvements in self-concept, complex social reasoning, and more internal locus of control of the experimental group when compared to the control group. There were no differences in the attendance or disciplinary incidents between control and treatment groups (Davidson, 1987). After an analysis of the qualitative data, Davidson (1987) reported an increased ability of students in the treatment group to positively support other group members. The usefulness of the results of this study are limited by the small sample size, the lack of random assignment to groups, non-equivalent groups, and the lack of demographic information about participants and facilitators.

The Davidson (1987) study is one of the few studies on ABC that was implemented by school counselors on school grounds. The study provides positive support for the use of ABC with at-risk students but is hampered by methodological limitations. Although much of the study is conducted on school grounds in a manner that would be accessible for many school counselors, major components of the intervention also occurred away from the school making it difficult to determine what part of the intervention was responsible for reported changes.

In the Wick et al. (1997) study, a school counselor and assistant delivered a six-week intervention to 42 fifth grade students, 21 girls and 20 boys, from a blue-collar suburb of a large city. The students were primarily lower income Hispanic and Caucasian students. The intervention consisted of a thirty-minute period each week in which students participated in a low-level ABC initiative followed by two processing periods. The first processing period occurred immediately following the activity. The second processing period occurred later in the day or the following day in the students' classroom.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the intervention, the school counselor administered the Piers-Harris before and after the intervention and teachers and students were interviewed about their experience in the ABC intervention.

The results indicated significant improvements of participants on five of the six subscales of the Piers-Harris Self-esteem Inventory after the six-week intervention. Significant differences were found on the subscales of behavior, intellectual and school status, physical appearance and attributes, anxiety, and popularity. No significant differences between control and treatment groups were found on the happiness and satisfaction scale.

Teachers reported that students had begun to mediate their own problems and that their classrooms' atmospheres had improved. Students reported that they had more friends after participating in the intervention.

Care must be taken in interpreting the results of this study because the study lacked methodological rigor. No control group was used; the same students did not participate in all six weeks of the intervention; the primary researchers also administered

the treatment; the sample size was small; and there was only one method used to evaluate the program.

The structure of the intervention in the Wick et al. (1997) study is a structure that would be easily replicated by practicing school counselors. Unfortunately, the severe methodological limitations of the study discussed above make the results of the study inconclusive.

While all of the studies reviewed lend preliminary support for the use of ABC in schools with at-risk students (Davidson, 1987; Leiberman &De Vos, 1982; Maizell, 1988; Wick et al., 1997) all are also limited by their lack of methodological rigor. One of the studies did not use a control group (Wick et al., 1997) and the others used non-equivalent control groups (Davidson, 1987; Leiberman & De Vos, 1983; Maizell, 1988). Other studies were limited by their small sample size (Davidson, 1987; Maizell, 1988; Wick et al., 1997). None of the studies reviewed by the researcher described using random assignment to groups (Davidson, 1987; Leiberman &De Vos, 1982; Maizell, 1988; Wick et al., 1997).

The transition to middle school is a difficult time for many students, particularly retained students or student who are otherwise considered to be at-risk. At the time of transition, students are challenged by the confluence of two major changes, the transition to a new and dramatically different school environment and the transition from childhood to adolescence.

Although the transition to middle school is associated with a variety of declines and is often the beginning of maladaptive development such as the onset of mental illness

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The transition to middle school is a difficult time for many students. During this period adolescents undergo major developmental and ecological changes. The period is marked by declines in several areas including declines in academic performance, declines in self-perception, declines in positive feelings towards school, declines in motivation, and declines in connectedness. Although research has demonstrated that the transition to middle school is a difficult life transition, particularly for at-risk students, there is a paucity of empirical studies about interventions to assist students in making the transition from elementary school to middle school. Furthermore, no study has been conducted to test the effectiveness of adventure-based counseling (ABC) for students making the transition from elementary school to middle school.

This study investigated the effectiveness of an ABC unit designed to improve the transition of at-risk students to middle school. This chapter begins with a description of the population and the sample for the study and is followed by a description of the research design and specific hypotheses being tested. Subsequent sections describe how the intervention program was implemented including a description of the intervention, preparation of school counselors, instruments used, procedures for data collection, and statistical methods for analysis of data.

Population and Sample

The population for this study was sixth grade middle school students attending

public school in Leon County or neighboring Wakulla County who were one or more

years overage for their grade and who were beginning middle school. Leon and Wakulla

Counties are located in northwest Florida and have a combined population of 268,969

people (Leon-244,208 and Wakulla 24,761). The demographic breakdown of the

population is included in Table3.1.

Table 3-1
Demographics of Leon and Wakulla Counties

	Leon County	Wakulla County	Leon and Wakulla Counties Combined
White	66%	86.1%	67.85%
Black	29%	11.5%	27.39%
Other Races	3%	2.2%	3.11%
Two or More Races	2%	1.2%	1.90%

The population is concentrated in the Tallahassee, the capital of Florida (Tallahassee-

Leon County, 2001).

The Leon County and Wakulla County public schools served 36,782 students

(Florida High-300; Leon County 31,802; Wakulla County 4680) as of November 2001.

The demographics of the school population are included in Table 3-2.

Table 3-2
Demographics of the School Population by Percentage

	Leon County	Florida High	Wakulla County	Total School Population
White	54.9	57.9	85.7	58.3
Black	39.5	25.0	11.8	36.3
Hispanic	1.9	8.3	0.9	2.0
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.9	3.8	0.3	1.8
Native American	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.2
Multicultural	1.7	5.1	1.0	1.7

There are nine traditional middle schools, one university lab school, and one charter middle school in Leon County serving 7470 students in grades six through eight and two middle schools in Wakulla County serving 1218 students in grades six through eight (Florida Department of Education, 2001). Of these students, *3065* were sixth graders and 302 were overage for their grade.

A total of 92 students were randomly selected to participate in the study from four schools in Leon County and one school in Wakulla County. The sample was 52.8% male and 47.2% female. Seventy-five percent of the sample qualified for free and reduced lunch. More demographics of the sample are included in Table 3-3 and Table 3-4.

Table 3-3
Ethnicity of the Sample by Percentage

Ethnicity	Percentage
White	50.6
Black	41.6
Hispanic	2.2
Asian	1.1
Multiracial	4.5

Table 3-4
Age of Sample by Percentage

Age	Percentage
11	5.6
12	44.9
13	44.9
14	4.5

One counselor at each school was identified to participate in the study. Two of the counselors were White females and two were Black females. All four counselors held a Master's degree in Guidance and Counseling and were certified guidance counselors in

the State of Florida. The average age of the participating counselors was 44, and their average experience as school counselors was 11 years.

Counselors were recruited by personal calls and/or visits from the researcher requesting their participation. The coordinator of school counselors for Leon County also sent an introductory letter introducing the researcher and the research project and requesting counselor participation. Each counselor ran one group with ten students each.

A list of sixth grade students at each school who were overage for their grade and new to the school was generated from the computer database. Counselors told students on this list about the project and invited them to participate. They gave parental consent forms (See Appendix A) to each of these students. Students who returned their parental consent forms by a set date received a pizza party regardless of whether their parents had agreed for them to participate in the study. The procedure was repeated until 20 students per counselor were selected to participate at each school.

A table of random numbers was used by each participating school to select ten students for the control group and 10 for the treatment group. Half of the participating students were randomly assigned to an experimental group (E1) that participated in the intervention. The other half was randomly assigned to a control group (E2) and received no treatment other than that which was provided to all students in the school.

Research Design

The design for this study was a pre-test, post-test control group design. The design is diagrammed in Table 3-5. Half of the participating students were randomly assigned to an experimental group (E1) that participated in the intervention. The other

half was randomly assigned to a control group (E2) and did not receive any assistance

other than that given to all students at the school.

Table 3-5
Research Design (Total N= 80)

Group	N	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test	Follow-up after 30 days
E1	40	Yes	Adventure Based Counseling Intervention	Yes	Yes
E2 (Control)	40	Yes		Yes	Yes

Hypotheses

- There will be no significant difference (α =.05) between experimental groups E1 and E2 in terms of school bonding, as measured by The Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (Goodenow, 1993) (See Appendix B).

- There will be no significant difference in difference (α =.05) in attitude toward school of experimental groups E1 and E2 as measured by the revised Student Attitude Scale Revised (See Appendix B).

- There will be no significant difference (α=.05) in the attendance of experimental groups E1 and E2 in terms of school attendance as measured by the number of days missed from school in the four weeks during and following the intervention.

- There will be no significant difference (α =.05) in generalized self-efficacy between experimental groups E1 and E2 as measured by the Generalized Self-efficacy Scale for Adolescents (See Appendix D).

Description of the Independent Variable

The intervention was designed to improve the transition of sixth grade students

who were overage for their grade and new to middle school. The intervention was an

ABC unit consisting of a series of team-building activities, also known as low-level

initiatives, followed by process questions focused on school transition issues such as

building trusting relationships with others, persistence, overcoming obstacles, drawing on

resources of others in the school, and handling frustration.

ABC uses physical and mental group problem solving activities (Alexander & Carlson, 1999). After completing the activities, the group leader helped students to make connections between the problems they were facing within the group context and problems they were experiencing in the "real world." ABC was flexible enough that it could be used to focus on particular issues facing individual group members (Glass & Shoffner, 2001). The risks and challenges of ABC provided a metaphor for discussing the risks and challenges associated with a transition to a new middle school.

Students participated in weekly 40-minute sessions over a five-week period. The participating school counselors served as experimenters in both the control and treatment groups. All experimenters attended a half-day training on delivering the intervention and received a written manual describing treatment procedures (See Appendix D).

The independent variable for the study was the ABC intervention. There are two levels of the intervention, treatment and no treatment. Students were randomly assigned to treatment (E1) and no treatment groups (E2).

Participating counselors conducted a meeting for all participating students in which they collected demographic information including age, birth date, name, gender, and ethnicity. In the same meeting participants completed, pre-test assessments including the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (See Appendix B), the Student Attitude Scale Revised (See Appendix B), and the Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale for Adolescents (See Appendix B). In addition, the researcher or the participating counselor pulled attendance records for students participating in the study from the school board computer databases. Along with random assignment, groups will be compared on

computer databases. Along with random assignment, groups will be compared on demographic variables and pretest scores in order to insure equivalency of experimental groups.

An overview of the intervention is described in Figure 3-1 and a brief description of each of the five sessions of the ABC guidance unit for transitioning students is included below:

Session One: Building Trusting Relationships

In the first session, students were informed of the purpose of the group and participated in establishing group guidelines for behavior through the full value contract activity. In this activity, group members discussed what they would like to get out of being in the group and how they might achieve these goals. The second activity, warp speed/group juggling, introduced students to the concepts of teamwork and planning. In addition, this activity helped students learn the names of other group members.

Session Two: Dealing with Frustration

In the second session, students participated in initiatives called "Ship Wreck" and "Willow in the Wind." In "Ship wreck," counselors gave students a 1.5 feet diameter cardboard circle that served as their ship. The goal of the activity was for the students to get their team to the other side of the ocean in the least amount of time. When the counselors called "ship wreck" the students had to get all their team members onto the ship. If even one foot was left off the ship a shark ate that person, and the team had to return to the shore and begin again.

During "Willow in the Wind," students stood in a circle with one student in the middle. The student in the middle closed his or her eyes and leaned towards the outside

of the circle. Other students had to support the student in the center by gently pushing he or she around the circle.

The counselor began the processing by asking about how group members experienced the activity. The counselor will then ask students to talk about frustrations they experience in school and how they might apply the skills they have utilized in completing this initiative.

Session Three: Persistence

In the third session, students participated in the initiative called "Stepping Stones." The goal of this initiative was for students to get their entire team across the river using stepping-stones provided (one less than the number of group members). This initiative required high levels of thinking and communication between group members. Most groups who participated in this activity took several attempts before they could successfully complete the activity. During the processing of this activity, the counselors helped the students to recognize the skills and attributes they utilized in completing the task such as persistence, leadership, communication and decision-making. Students were asked to think of situations in their lives in which these same skills might be employed.

Session Four: Overcoming Obstacles

In the fourth session, the students participated in initiatives called "Egg Drop" and "Knots." In the egg drop activity the counselors gave the group raw egg, 12 straws, and 2 feet of masking tape and asked them to create a basket for the egg so that the egg could survive a drop from 20 feet. Students then had the opportunity to test their products. In the second activity, "Knots" the students stood in a circle and grabbed two different hands from across the circle. The goal was for the students to untwist the circle

without dropping hands. During the processing of this activity, the counselor helped students to focus on the obstacles they had to overcome in order to complete the activity. Students frequently mentioned not trusting team members and fear as obstacles they faced. Students were then be asked about the obstacles they face at school and what strategies they might use to overcome these obstacles.

Session Five: Depending on Others/Teamwork

The final initiative, "Tower Building", required high levels of planning, communication, and cooperation among team members in order to complete. The students were divided into two groups of students and each group was given an identical bag full of supplies including straws, tape, paper, paper cups, newspaper, paper clips, and tape. The counselors instructed the students to build as high a freestanding tower as possible with the given materials. The counselors also instructed the students that the towers must be strong enough to withstand the winds of Hurricane Counselor.

During the processing, the counselor will help students to focus on their dependence on group members for completing the task. The counselor will ask students who they can depend on in the school to help them with challenging situations. The counselor will end the days activities by asking each group member to write down on a piece of paper, marked with the group members name, one skill that he or she and each team member demonstrated during the days activities. Each team member will be given the responses that other group members have written about him or her.

Figure 3-1.
Summary of a Five-week ABC Guidance Unit

	Activities	Objectives
Session 1 Empowerment/Building Trusting Relationships	Full Value Contract Warp Speed Group Juggle	Empowerment Communication Trust-building Cooperation Planning
Session 2 Persistence	Review Full Value Contract Ship Wreck Willow in the Wind	Communication Cooperation Persistence Group Cohesion Planning
Session 3 Dealing with Frustration	Stepping Stones	Communication Learning skills to handle frustration Persistence Cooperation
Session 4 Overcoming Obstacles	Egg Drop Knots	Communication Trust-building Overcoming obstacles Cooperation Listening Skills
Session 5 Depending on Others	Tower Building	Planning Cooperation Communication Utilization of group resources Decision-making

The exact treatment protocol and guidance unit are included in Appendix D. School counselors from each school conducted the intervention. In order to insure the integrity of the treatment, counselors followed a written treatment protocol.

Preparation of School Counselors

Middle school counselors from Leon County coordinated the study and delivered the guidance unit at their respective schools. The researcher began the recruitment of counselors by contacting the Lead Counselor for Leon County. After receiving permission to conduct the study, the researcher contacted individual counselors by phone to request their participation in the study. Four middle school counselors agreed to participate.

All participating counselors attended a half-day training on the delivery of the ABC guidance unit for transitioning students. During the training, the counselors participated in each of the five activities that were part of the guidance unit. The completion of the activities was followed by a time for reflection and questions. The counselors also received information about processing the activities with students and the challenges of transitioning to middle school for at-risk students. In addition, the researcher gave each counselor a copy of a group facilitator's manual for the guidance unit, parent consent forms (See Appendix A), student assent forms (See Appendix A), a research packet of information that outlined the research procedures, a package including all the equipment and supplies needed for completion of the unit, and assessment packages for each participating student. The participating counselors were asked to complete the tasks outlined in Figure 3-2.

Figure 3-2.
Counselor Tasks

Tasks
Attend Adventure-based Counseling Training
Identify eligible students and send home parent consent forms

Figure 3-2. Continued

Tasks
Hold pizza party for students returning parent consent forms and administer pre-tests
Randomly assign students to control or treatment groups
Deliver guidance unit to students in treatment group
Administer post-tests to control and treatment groups
Have all current data ready for pick-up by researcher
Administer follow-up assessments to control and treatment groups
Have all data from follow-up assessment ready for pick-up by researcher

Dependent Measures

School Bonding

School bonding was assessed using the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (Goodenow, 1993). The scale is an 18-item scale used to measure adolescent students' perceived bonding or membership within the school environment. Included items assess personal acceptance, perceived liking, inclusion, and encouragement for participation by peers, teachers and other school staff. Some examples of items include "I feel like a real part of this school," "Other students here like me the way I am," and "There is at least one teacher or adult in this school that I can talk to if I have a problem." The instrument was normed on sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in both urban and suburban schools. Items are structured in the Likert format with answers ranging from (1) *not at all true* to (5) *completely true*. One third of the items are negatively worded in order to keep students from using a "response set" (Goodenow, 1993).

Cronbach's alpha which is used to measure internal consistency, ranged from 0.875 to 0.884 in the Goodenow (1993) study. In a study by Isakson and Jarvis (1999) internal consistencies were 0.90, 0.91 and 0.91 across three different measurements. Construct

validity was determined using contrasted group validation procedures. Results supported the validity of the scale. For example, suburban students rated as having low social standing by their peers also had significantly lower scores on the PSSM scale when compared with students who had higher social ratings. Urban students who chose to remain at their current school instead of transfer to a new school also had significantly higher scores than those students who chose to transfer to a new school.

Attitude Toward School

Attitudes toward school will be assessed using the Student Attitude Scale Revised (SASR). The scale is a revised form of the Nebraska Student Attitude Scale (NSAS)(Seagran, 1967). The scale is used to measure students' attitudes towards school. Five subscales are included and assess attitudes toward school, teachers, and interpersonal relationships with teachers, peers, and self. The researcher contacted the author of the original scale and gained permission to revise the scale. The main thrust of the revisions was to adjust the scale for middle school students instead of high school students and also to change the teacher subscale to a school staff subscale. The number of items on the scale was also reduced from 65 to 45. Sample items from the original scale and how they were revised are included in Figure 3-3.

Figure 3-3.
Examples of Revised Scale Items

Original Item	Revised Item
Teachers are aware of the opinions of students.	School staff are aware of the opinions of students.
Teachers know when I have done a good job.	School staff know when I have done a good job.
My teachers have helped me to make new friends.	School staff have helped me make new friends.

The researcher conducted a pilot study in which the revised instrument was administered to a group of middle school students in an after school remediation program on two occasions one week apart. This pilot examined the test-retest reliability as well as its internal consistency with an early adolescent population. Three school counselors and three counselor educators also reviewed the revised scale for the purpose of establishing the validity of the scale.

School Attendance

School Attendance was assessed by recording the number of full days absent from school in the four weeks prior to, during, and following the intervention. The director of evaluation services in Leon County pulled the school attendance for participating Leon County Schools. The participating counselors from Wakulla Middle School and Florida High pulled the school attendance for the students from their respective schools.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy was assessed using an adaptation of the Generalized Self-efficacy scale for Adolescents. The scale is modeled after the Generalized Self-efficacy Scale (Sherer et al., 1982). This 23-item scale assesses generalized self-efficacy or self-efficacy not related to a specific behavior or situation. The items describe situations in which participants show initiation and persistence in the face of adversity. Examples of items on the general self-efficacy subscale include, " Failure just makes me try harder" and "I give up easily." Examples of items from the social self-efficacy scale include, " It is difficult for me to meet new friends" and "I do not handle myself well in social

gatherings." Items are in a 5-point Likert format with anchors ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The researcher conducted a pilot study in which the instrument was administered to a group of middle school students on two occasions one week apart. This pilot test tested the test-retest reliability as well as its internal consistency with an early adolescent population. Three school counselors and three counselor educators also reviewed the revised scale for the purpose of establishing the validity of the scale.

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Additional Assessments

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Student's Survey

Following the completion of the ABC guidance unit and the collection of the data, students in group E1 were asked to complete a short survey about their impressions of the intervention. The survey consisted of five questions, answered on a Likert scale from 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neither agree nor disagree, 4-Agree, to 5-Strongly Agree as well as two questions that required qualitative responses. The questions were as follows.

1. I liked participating in the ABC orientation.

2. Participating in the ABC guidance unit helped me to make new friends.

3. Participating in the ABC guidance unit will help me do better in school.

4. Participating in the ABC guidance unit helped me to feel like I belong at this school.

5. I would recommend the ABC guidance unit to my friends.

6. What was the most helpful part about the ABC guidance unit?

7. What would you do to improve the ABC guidance unit?

Counselor's Survey

Following the completion of the ABC guidance unit and the collection of the data, participating counselors were asked to fill out a short survey of their impressions of the ABC unit. The survey consisted of six items, that were answered in Likert scale format from scale from 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neither agree nor disagree, 4-Agree, to 5-Strongly Agree as well as two questions that required qualitative responses. The questions were as follows.

1. The ABC guidance unit was easy to complete.

2. The guidance unit was easy to follow.

3. The ABC guidance unit helped participating students adjust to being a new student at a middle school

4. The ABC guidance unit helped students to build supportive relationships with other students.

5. I would use the ABC guidance unit again and recommend it to others.

6. What did you think was most helpful about the ABC guidance unit?

7. What would you do to improve the ABC guidance unit?

Collection of the Data

Participating counselors conducted a meeting for all participating students in which they collected demographic information including, age, name, sex, ethnicity, gender, and birthday. In the same meeting participants completed, pre-test assessments including the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale, the Student Attitude Scale Revised, and the adapted Generalized Self-efficacy Scale for Adolescents.

The principal researcher individually numbered each pretest and posttest packet. Each number was matched to students' names on a master list that indicated whether each

student was participating in E1 or E2. In order to insure confidentiality, no other identification was written on the students' test materials.

The day of the last session of the intervention and again at 30 days after the last session, the counselor at each school scheduled a meeting with all participants in the study, groups E1 and E2 in order to administer the post-assessments. The primary investigator collected data from the counselors at each school on the same day that the data was collected from the students, checked the data for completion, scored the assessments, and stored the data in a locked file cabinet.

Analysis of the Data

The researcher entered all data collected from the school sites into an Excel® spreadsheet. SPSS was used to analyze all data. The first step in the analysis of the data was to look at the raw data, the means, standard deviations, ranges and frequency distributions in each cell for skew distributions, bimodal distributions, extreme outliers, unusual values, and incorrect sample sizes (Cone & Foster, 1999).

After a preliminary analysis of data, the researcher used an Analysis of Variance to compare groups E1 and E2 on the demographic variables of age, attendance, and pretest scores. The researcher examined the data to ensure that it met the statistical assumptions of ANCOVA, normality, independence of scores, and homogeneity of variance. The researcher conducted a spit plot ANOVA with repeated measures using SPSS to analyze the differences between groups E1 and E2 on the dependent variable attendance. She used an Analysis of Covariance to analyze the differences between control and treatment groups on the dependent measure, PSSM, SASR, and GSESA.

Pretest scores were used as the covariate after checking to ensure that there was a linear relationship between the pre and post test scores. The results of the data analysis will be discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

This study examined the effectiveness of an ABC unit for students who are at-risk because they were overage for their grade and who were new to middle school. School counselors delivered the intervention at four middle schools in Leon and Wakulla Counties. The five-week ABC unit was designed to help students address some of challenges they might face in beginning middle school.

To assess the effectiveness of the ABC unit the researcher utilized ANCOVA to measure the differences between control and treatment groups on the dependent variables before and after the intervention. A repeated measures ANCOVA was used to analyze school attendance data. The researcher explored the data to insure that the assumptions for ANCOVA, linear relationship with covariate, independent distribution of scores, normality, and homogeneity of variances were met.

The dependent variables were measured using the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale, the Student Attitude Scale Revised, School Attendance, and The Generalized Self-efficacy Scale for Adolescents. The pretest scores were used as the covariate to neutralize the influence of pre-intervention differences on the scores of each measure.

The researcher created two new scales for the study, the Student Attitude Scale Revised and The Generalized Self-efficacy Scale for Adolescents. These two scales were

The researcher created two new scales for the study, the Student Attitude Scale Revised and The Generalized Self-efficacy Scale for Adolescents. These two scales were field tested with 30 at-risk middle school students attending an after-school remediation program.

The school counselors at each school administered the assessments to control and treatment groups at their respective schools. Forty-one students participated in the treatment and 41 of these students were in a control group that received no treatment other than treatment received by all students in the school.

The results of the data analyses are reported in this chapter. The report includes results of the pilot study, means and standard deviations for treatment and control groups on each the dependent variable, results of the ANCOVA for each dependent variable, and a summary of results.

Data Analysis

Pilot Study Results

The researcher investigated the reliability and validity of both the Student Attitude Scale Revised and The Generalized Self-efficacy Scale for Adolescents. Results of the pilot study are summarized in Table 4.1. The internal consistency for Student Attitude Scale Revised was $\alpha=.8470$. The stability was .732. In the validity study of the scale, experts responded that they agreed or strongly agreed that middle school students would be able to understand and respond to the items on the scale, that the scale measured the construct of attitude toward school, that the language was appropriate for middle school students, and that the measure was an effective measure of students' attitude toward school.

The internal consistency The Generalized Self-efficacy Scale for Adolescents was α=.8108. The stability was .493. In a validity study of the scale, 100% of the experts responded that they agreed or strongly agreed that middle school students would be able to understand and respond to the items on the scale, that the scale measured the construct of self-efficacy, that the language was appropriate for middle school students, and that the measure was an effective measure of self-efficacy.

Table 4.1
Pilot Study Results

	Student Attitude Scale Revised	Generalized Self-efficacy Scale for Adolescents
Internal consistency (α)	.8470	.8108
Stability	.7320	.4913

Hypotheses testing

The researcher investigated four hypotheses using four dependent variables, school bonding, attitude toward school, school attendance, and self-efficacy. The report includes descriptive information on each of the dependent variables.

The sample sizes (n) mean scores, and the standard deviations (SD) of the four dependent variables are reported by group (control or treatment) and by time (pre or post test) in Table 4.2 and 4.3. An increase in the scores on the PSSM, SASR, and the GSESA shows improvement. A decrease in the number of days absent from school shows improvement.

Table 4.2

Mean Scores by Group, Assessment Instrument, and Time of Testing.

Assessment Instrument			*Pre-test*			*Post-test*
	N	Mean	SD	Mean		
SD						
PSSM-Treatment	36	62.2778	11.1499	60.7500	12.1547	
PSSM-Control	39	62.2564	11.8404	62.6667	10.6976	
SASR-Treatment	35	90.4471	15.9805	95.4286	14.3635	
SASR-Control	40	95.6750	16.6785	94.1500	15.9559	
GSESA-Treatment	35	104.8571	14.0903	102.7429	13.7420	
GSESA-Control	40	102.9750	12.9881	102.6000	14.1911	

Table 4.3

Unexcused Absences Five Weeks Prior to, During, and After the Intervention

Unexcused Absences Intervention		*Pre-Intervention*		*During-Intervention*		*After-*
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean
SD						
Treatment Group	40	.70	1.14	.78	1.07	.72	1.13
Control Group	40	.38	.67	.25	.54	.55	1.24

School Bonding

School bonding was assessed using the instrument, The Psychological Sense of
School Membership Scale. The scale is an 18-item scale used to measure adolescent
students' perceived bonding or membership within the school environment. Included
items assess personal acceptance, perceived liking, inclusion, and encouragement for
participation by peers, teachers and other school staff. Higher scores indicate higher
levels of bonding to school.

> Ho_1: There will be no significant difference ($\alpha =.05$) between experimental
> groups E1 and E2 in terms of school bonding, as measured by The Psychological
> Sense of School Membership Scale (Goodenow, 1993) (See Appendix C).

No significant differences (F=1.118, p>.05) were found between control and experimental groups on school bonding as measured by the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale; therefore, Ho_1 was not rejected. From the results of this investigation, the ABC unit had no statistically significant effect on students' school bonding. The results of are presented in Table 4.4 below:

Table 4.4
Summary Table for Analysis of Covariance for the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (PSSM) by group.

Source of Variance	df	SS	Mean Square	F	P
Pretest	1	5020.584	5020.584	80.350	.000
Group	1	69.879	69.879	1.118	.294
Error	72	4498.833	62.484		

Attitude toward school

Attitude toward school was assessed using the Student Attitude Scale Revised (SASR). The scale is used to measure students' attitudes towards school including their attitudes toward school, teachers, and interpersonal relationships with teachers, peers, and self. Higher scores indicate more positive attitudes toward school.

Ho_2 There will be no significant difference in difference (α =.05) in attitude toward school of experimental groups E1 and E2 as measured by the Student Attitude Scale Revised (See Appendix D).

Significant differences (F=4.130, p<.05) were found between control and experimental groups on attitude toward school as measured by the Student Attitude Scale Revised; therefore, Ho_1 was rejected. From the results of this investigation, the ABC unit apparently has a statistically significant effect on students' attitude toward school. The results of are presented in Table 4.5 below:

Table 4.5
Summary Table for Analysis of Covariance for the Student Attitude Scale Revised (SASR) by group.

Source of Variance	df	SS	Mean Square	F	P
Pretest	1	9345.062	9345.62	88.548	.000
Treatment	1	435.892	4365.892	4.130	.046*
Error	72	7598.610	105.536		

* *Statistically significant at p<.05 level*

School Attendance

School attendance was assessed using the number of days absent prior to, during, and after the intervention. Fewer days missed from school is considered a positive result.

Ho$_3$: There will be no significant difference (α=.05) in the school attendance of experimental groups E1 and E2 in terms of school attendance as measured by the number of days missed from school in the five weeks before, during, and following the intervention.

Significant differences (F=4.116, p<.05) were found between control and experimental groups on school attendance as measured by the days absent from school; therefore, Ho$_3$ was rejected. The results indicated that students in the control group had statistically significant better attendance during the intervention than students in the control group. The results of are presented in Table 4.6 and 4.7 below:

Table 4.6
Summary Table for Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance for School Attendance by group. Between Subject Effects

Source of Variance	df	SS	Mean Square	F	P
Treatment Group	1	7.004	7.004	4.116	.046*
Error	78	132.725	1.702		

* Statistically significant at p<.05

Table 4.7
Summary Table for Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance for Attendance by group.
Within Subjects Effects Sphericity Assumed

Source of Variance	df	SS	Mean Square	F	P
Time	2	.700	.350	.538	.585
Time*Treatment	2	1.223	.617	.949	.389
Error	156	101.400	.650		

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy was assessed using Generalized Self-efficacy Scale for Adolescents.

This 23-item scale assesses generalized self-efficacy or self-efficacy not related to a

specific behavior or situation. The items describe situations in which participants show

initiation and persistence in the face of adversity.

Ho$_4$ There will be no significant difference (α =.05) in generalized self-efficacy
between experimental groups E1 and E2 as measured by the Generalized Self-
efficacy Scale for Adolescents *(See Appendix E)*.

No significant differences (F=.547, p>.05) were found between control and

experimental groups on self-efficacy as measured by the Generalized Self-efficacy Scale

for Adolescents; therefore, Ho$_1$ was not rejected. From the results of this investigation,

the ABC unit had no statistically significant effect on students' self-efficacy. The results

of are presented in Table 4.8 below:

Table 4.8
Summary Table for Analysis of Covariance for the Generalized Self-efficacy Scale for
Adolescents by group.

Source of Variance	df	SS	Mean Square	F	P
Pretest	1	9682.213	9682.13	133.546	.000
Group	1	39.662	39.662	.547	.462
Error	72	5220.073	72.501		

Other Findings

Participating counselors and students in the treatment group filled out a questionnaire during the last session of the ABC unit. There responses to each of the questions are tabulated in Table 4.9 and Table 4.10. All of the school counselors agreed or strongly agreed that the ABC Unit was easy to complete and that the guidance unit was easy to follow. All but one of the counselors thought that the unit improved students' attitudes towards school. All thought that the ABC unit helped students' develop supportive relationships with other students in the school and that they would recommend the ABC unit to others.

Ninety-two percent of the students liked participating in the ABC group and 84% of the students would recommend the ABC group to friends. Seventy-four percent of the students thought the ABC unit helped them to make new friends; 61% that it helped them do better in school; and 76% agreed or strongly agreed that the ABC unit helped them to feel like they belong at school.

Table 4.9

Counselor Survey Results (n=5)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Question 1 (easy to complete)	1	4			
Question 2 (easy to follow)	3	2			
Question 3 (help students adjust to middle school)		4	1		

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Question 4 (built supportive relationships with other students)	1	4			
Question 5 (recommend to others)	3	2			

Table 4.10
Student Survey Results (n=38)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know	Agree	Strongly Agree
Question 1 (liked participating)	0	0	3	17	18
Question 2 (helped make new friends)	0	5	4	18	10
Question 3 (helped me do better in school)	0	1	12	17	6
Question 4 (helped me feel like I belong)	1	2	4	17	12
Question 5 (recommend to friends)	0	0	5	14	18

Summary of Results

A summary of results of this study is presented below. The results are organized by the dependent variables.

School Bonding as measured by the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (PSSM).

There were no significant difference between experimental and control groups on school bonding as measured by the PSSMS.

Attitudes Toward School as measured by the Student Attitude Scale Revised (SASR).

There was a significant difference in attitude toward school between experimental and control groups as measured by the SASR. The experimental group had statistically significant more positive attitudes toward school when compared to the control group.

School Attendance as measured by the days missed from school before, during, and after the intervention.

There were significant differences between control and experimental groups in attendance during the intervention. The control group had statistically significant fewer days absent during the intervention than the experimental group.

Self-efficacy as measured by the Generalized Self-efficacy Scale for Adolescents (GSESA).

There were no significant differences between experimental and control groups on self-efficacy as measured by the GSESA.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, OTHER
FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study examined the effectiveness of an adventure-based counseling unit for adolescents who were new to middle school and at-risk because they were overage for their grade. Sixth grade students from four different middle schools were randomly assigned to control or treatment groups. Students in the treatment group participated in a five-week ABC unit designed to help at-risk students improve their transition to middle school. The ABC unit consisted of active, hands-on group problem solving challenges. The activities were followed by a time for reflection about what occurred in during the group activity and how they might apply what they learned in the group to real-life situations.

The study assessed four different indicators of adjustment and success at school. More specifically, the study examined school bonding, attitudes toward school, school attendance, and self-efficacy. The assessments used to measure these constructs were the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (PSSMS), the Student Attitude Scale Revised (SASR), the number of days absent five weeks prior to, during, and after the intervention, and the Generalized Self-efficacy Scale for Adolescents (GSESA).

An analysis of covariance was performed to test for differences between control and treatment groups on the measures of the PSSMS, SASR, and the GSESA. A repeated measure analysis of covariance was used to assess the differences between the control

and treatment groups on the number of days absent from school in the five weeks prior to, during, and after the intervention. The results of the study showed that there were no significant differences between control and treatment groups on the PSSMS or the GSESA. Students in the treatment group had more positive attitudes toward school after the intervention than students in the control group. Students in the control group had statistically significant fewer absences during the period of intervention than the students in the treatment group.

Conclusions

The students who participated in the ABC unit did not feel more bonded to school or have a greater sense of self-efficacy than those students in the control group who did not receive any treatment other than what all students attending the school received. Students in the treatment group did however have more positive attitudes toward school than those students in the control group. Students in the control group had statistically significant fewer absences during the intervention period. However, none of the students participating in the study, either in the treatment or control groups, had a pattern of regular unexcused absences. The most frequent number of absences during any of the time periods examined was zero.

Although, with the exception of students' attitudes toward school, students who participated in the ABC unit did not show any differences from student in the control group on dependent measures, the large majority of students reported that the group helped them to make new friends (74%), do better in school (61%), and feel like they belong at the school (76%). The majority of participating school counselors thought that

the ABC unit helped students have better attitudes at school (80%) and to develop supportive relationships with other students (100%).

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Limitations

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There were several limitations to the study that may account for the lack of effectiveness of the ABC unit in improving school bonding, attendance, or self-efficacy of students in the treatment group. The limitations fall in one of the following categories: limitations in the sample selection, limitations in the design of the intervention, and limitations in the assessment instruments utilized.

Although students were randomly selected at each of the four schools to participate in treatment or control groups the resultant groups may be somewhat biased. The researcher gave counselors a list of all the students in their respective schools who were overage for their grades; however, only those students who turned in their permission forms were eligible to participate in either control or treatment groups. In addition, only four out of ten possible schools chose to participate in the study. Schools were not selected randomly but were selected because their school counselor volunteered to participate. The resultant sample may be different from the population of all overage students in Leon and Wakulla Counties.

There were also several limitations surrounding the assessment instruments. The researcher revised two instruments, SASR and the GSESA, that were used in the study. Although the researcher conducted a pilot study to examine the reliability and validity of these revised instruments, their validity and reliability has not been established over time. The internal consistency of both of the scales was good, but the stability over time was not established for the GSESA and was barely acceptable for the SASR. The results of

the test-retest reliability study were questionable due to the threat of history. Between the test and retest students participated in the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). This intervening variable may have impacted their responses on the retest during the pilot study.

The researcher discovered during the pilot testing of the instruments and through visual inspection of the data that towards the end of the assessments students began to tire. Their responses seemed to indicate that they were not answering questions truthfully. Students seem to have some difficulty with reverse items. The participating counselors read the questions to participating students, but the students were asked to respond to 75 questions. In retrospect, the survey was probably too long for at-risk sixth graders. The researcher collected data not only before and after the intervention but at one-month follow-up as well. The follow-up data was omitted from the study because too much of the data seemed to follow repetitive response patterns. For example, more than one third of the sample marked the same answer for each of the questions on the follow-up assessments.

The design of the study also has limitations. The ABC unit was short in duration, five weeks. The researcher chose a short time for several reasons. Because school counselors have large caseloads and multiple responsibilities, the researcher did not think she could recruit counselors to participate in a long intervention. The population under study is also known to be highly mobile. Attrition would likely be a problem in a longer study. The use of ABC recommended in the literature for school counselors is also of short duration, and school counselors are accustomed to conducting small group interventions that run for four to eight weeks. The assessment instruments may not have

been sensitive enough to detect the small changes that could have occurred in such a short intervention.

The researcher also chose the easiest ABC activities to include in the ABC unit to ensure that school counselors felt comfortable conducting the activities with only one half day of training. Some other more difficult and more intensive activities may have had more of an effect.

The ABC unit was designed to be conducted at the very beginning of the school year. Due to circumstances beyond the control of the researcher, the study had to be conducted later in the school year. The ABC unit may have had more impact if it had been delivered at the beginning of the school year. In addition, as is often the case with research conducted in a school setting, multiple interventions may have been occurring at the same time as the ABC unit. For example, two of the schools under study had successful programs in place to improve students' attendance. Students from these schools in both control and treatment groups had almost no absences before, during, or after the intervention.

Implications

This study was one of the first to examine the effectiveness of ABC unit delivered by school counselor with at-risk students. The results lend some support to the idea proposed by Glass and Shoffner (2001) and Nassar-McMillan and Cashwell (1997) that ABC is an appropriate intervention for school counselors. The results extend the results found by Wick, Wick, and Peterson (1997) by providing an examination of ABC that is a much more methodologically rigorous study than the initial empirical examination of the use of ABC by school counselors. In the Wick et al. (1997) study no control group was

used; the same students did not participate in all six weeks of the intervention; the primary researchers administered the treatment; the sample size was small; and there was only one method used to evaluate the program.

School counselors recognize that the transition to a new middle school can be difficult for many students, particularly at-risk students. In conversations with the participating counselors, all mentioned that they needed resources that were suitable for using with at-risk students. The ABC unit can be an important resource for school counselors seeking to improve at-risk students' attitudes toward school. Both students and school counselors liked the active, hands-on approach of the ABC unit and enjoyed participating in the ABC group.

The feedback from both school counselors and students about the ABC unit was very positive. All school counselors reported that the ABC unit helped students' to build supportive relationships with other students in the school. The majority students also reported that the group helped them to do better in school, make new friends, and to feel apart of the school. The feedback from students and school counselors contradicts the results of the study on the measures of school bonding and self-efficacy. Perhaps studies using more sensitive measures and a more intensive and longer intervention might result in significant differences on these measures.

None of the students participating in the study had a pattern of non-attendance at school. To determine if the ABC unit is effective in improving attendance, perhaps a future study could target students for intervention who do not attend school regularly.

Recommendations

This study points to several areas for further research and practice. The study should be replicated with more students from schools that have been randomly selected from a larger population. It might also be interesting to look at the differences in outcomes for interventions of differing duration and intensity in order to determine the optimal duration and intensity necessary to demonstrate positive outcomes. The study could also be replicated earlier in the school year to see if differences in outcome between control and treatment groups occur if the ABC unit is delivered at the beginning of the school year as initially designed.

The study could also be replicated using different outcome measures. Perhaps outcome measures that are more sensitive could detect small changes that might occur in short intervention. Such instruments may need to be developed and tested in a variety of settings before being utilized. The researcher's recommendation is to utilize only one, short pencil and paper measure to assess differences between the control and treatment groups and to substitute more hard data such as changes in the number of referrals or school grades over time.

In addition, the study could be enhanced by using direct observation of behavioral changes and by adding a qualitative analysis. Teachers and parents could be asked to provide information about changes in behavior, and the researcher could interview students to talk with them about any changes that may have taken place as a result of participation in the study. These individual interviews with students and counselors might help to identify variables that could be researched in further studies.

By using different methods to assess outcomes, future researchers may also be able to conduct follow-up assessments that could determine if the changes that occurred as the result of treatment can be sustained over time.

To enhance the effectiveness of the ABC unit, the unit could be integrated with other programs designed to help with the transition from elementary school to middle school. For example, teachers might refer students to participate in a study who were known to have problems in adjusting to middle school. Targeted students could then be linked with trained peer facilitator who could help students to feel bonded to the school. Counselors, teachers, and administrators could also reach out to the parents of participating students to help them to connect with adults in the school. Students experiencing academic difficulties could also be referred to remediation programs that would help them academic areas where the students are having difficulty. Although, these types of multiple interventions are more difficult to study, they may provide the broad range of support that helps at-risk students to be successful in school.

There are models of using ABC as an intervention integrated throughout the entire curriculum (Leiberman & De Vos, 1982), over the entire school year, and with all students in the school that have shown positive outcomes. A brief ABC unit targeted for specific students around particular issues, such as the one in this study, could be an important adjunct to such a model of ABC.

This study conducted an evaluation of an ABC unit with students who were new to middle school and considered at-risk because they were overage for their grade. The ABC unit was effective in improving student attitudes toward school. Although school counselors and students reported several beneficial aspects of the treatment, no

differences were found between control and treatment groups on school bonding or self-efficacy. Students in the control group had fewer days absent during the intervention than students in the treatment group. No students in the study had a pattern of frequent absences from school.

The study had several methodological limitations. These limitations can be categorized as limitations in the sample selection, limitations in the design of the intervention, and limitations in the assessment instruments utilized. Among these limitations were that participating school were not selected randomly; assessment instruments were long and their validity had not been established over time: and the intervention was brief and was not delivered at the beginning of the school year as designed.

Further research is needed in order to validate the results of this study and to extend the results of the study. Future research might focus on using different types of data to assess outcomes of the intervention, varying the intensity and duration of the intervention, using a larger sample size, and targeting students with know problems adjusting to middle school.

The ABC unit may also be used in conjunction with other interventions to help students adjust to a new middle school. Combining multiple interventions to target specific students may help to create a web of support that can help at-risk students to succeed in school.

APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a graduate student in the Department of Counselor Education at the University of Florida. I am conducting research on the effectiveness of an adventure-based counseling intervention for students undergoing a transition to middle school under the supervision of Dr. Robert Myrick. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of an adventure-based counseling and guidance unit designed to improve the school transition of sixth grade students who have been previously retained and who are new to middle school. With your permission, I would like to ask your child to volunteer for this research.

Students will participate in five weekly 40-minute adventure-based counseling sessions that consist of hands on activities to teach communication, decision-making, and planning skills. All activities will be carried out on school grounds under the direction of the school counselor. Activities will be conducted in November and December. Before and after the sessions students will complete a series of assessment tests designed to determine the effectiveness of the adventure-based counseling intervention. These include the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale, The Generalized Self-efficacy Scale for Adolescents, and the Student Attitude Scale Revised.

With your permission, your child may be videotaped as he or she participates in the activities. The video will be accessible only to the research team for verification purposes. At the end of the study, the tape will be erased. Although the children will be asked to write their names on the questionnaires for matching purposes, their identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. We will replace their names with code numbers. Results will only be reported in the form of group data. Participation or non-participation in this study will not affect the children's grades or placement in any programs.

You and your child have the right to withdraw consent for your child's participation at any time without consequence. There are no known risks or immediate benefits to the participants. No compensation is offered for participation. Group results of this study will be available in May 2003 upon request. If you have any questions about this research protocol, please contact me at 850-216-2586 or my faculty supervisor, Dr. Myrick, at 352-392-0731. Questions or concerns about your child's rights as research participant may be directed to the UFIRB office, University of Florida, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611, (352) 392-0433.

Ann Allen Rai

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily give my consent for my child, _____, to participate in Ann Rai's study of the effectiveness of an adventure-based counseling intervention. I have received a copy of this description.

_____ _____
Parent / Guardian Date

_____ _____
2nd Parent / or Witness Date

Dear Student:

I am a graduate student in the Department of Counselor Education at the University of Florida. I am conducting research on the effectiveness of an adventure-based counseling intervention for students undergoing a transition to middle school under the supervision of Dr. Robert Myrick. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of an adventure-based counseling and guidance unit designed to improve the school transition of sixth grade students who have been previously retained and who are new to middle school. With your permission, I would like to ask you to volunteer for this research.

You will participate in five weekly 40-minute adventure-based counseling sessions that consist of hands on activities to teach communication, decision-making, and planning skills. All activities will be carried out on school grounds under the direction of the school counselor in November and December. Before and after the sessions you will complete a series of assessment tests designed to determine the effectiveness of the adventure-based counseling intervention. These include the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale, The Generalized Self-efficacy Scale for Adolescents, and the Student Attitude Scale Revised.

With your permission, you may be videotaped as you participate in the activities. The video will be accessible only to the research team for verification purposes. At the end of the study, the tape will be erased. Although you will be asked to write your name on the questionnaires for matching purposes, your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. We will replace their names with code numbers. Results will only be reported in the form of group data. Participation or non- participation in this study will not affect the your grades or placement in any programs.

You have the right to withdraw consent for your participation at any time without consequence. There are no known risks or immediate benefits to the participants. No compensation is offered for participation. Group results of this study will be available in May 2003 upon request. If you have any questions about this research protocol, please contact me at 850-216-2586 or my faculty supervisor, Dr. Myrick, at 352-392-0731. Questions or concerns about your child's rights as research participant may be directed to the UFIRB office, University of Florida, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611, (352) 392-0433.

Ann Allen Rai

I have read the procedure described above. I , _____, voluntarily agree to participate in Ann Rai's study of the effectiveness of an adventure-based counseling intervention. I have received a copy of this description.

_____ _____
Student/ Date

Instructions: This questionnaire is a series of statements about your personal characteristics, beliefs, and attitudes. Read each statement carefully and decide to what extent it describes you. There are no wrong or right answers, and no teachers or staff from the school will see your personal answers. You will probably agree with some of the statements and disagree with others. Choose your own personal feelings about each statement listed below by marking the letter on your answer sheet that best describes your attitude or belief. Please be very truthful and describe yourself to the best of your ability. Mark the following letters on your answer sheet to match your answer. Make sure to fully darken in each letter.

A=	B=	C=	D=	E=
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree

Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale

1. I feel like a real part of this school.
2. People hear notice when I am good at something.
3. It is hard for people like me to be accepted here.
4. Other students in this school take my opinions seriously.
5. Most teachers at this school are interested in me.
6. Sometimes I feel as if I don't belong here.
7. There's at least one teacher or other adult in this school I can talk to if I have a problem.
8. People at this school are friendly to me.
9. Teachers here are not interested in people like me.
10. I am included in lots of activities at this school.
11. I am treated with as much respect as other students.
12. I feel very different from most other students here.
13. I can really be myself at this school.
14. The teachers here respect me.
15. People here know I can do good work.
16. I wish I were in a different school.
17. I feel proud belonging to this school.
18. Other students here like me the way I am.

Student Attitude Scale- Revised

19. I think schoolwork is important.
20. School staff are concerned about whether or not a student has friends.

21. Students in my school make a special effort to make new students feel welcome.
22. At least one member of the school staff is interested in me as a person.
23. School staff have talked with me about the things I do best.
24. School staff show respect and consideration for students under their supervision.
25. Time spent is school is worthwhile.
26. School staff speak to me outside of class.
27. I am involved in school activities.
28. I can talk about my real feeling with at least one adult at school.
29. Most middle school students are interested in helping other students succeed.
30. I seldom think about quitting school.
31. Adults at school let me know when I have done a good job.
32. Adults in the school have helped me to make new friends.
33. Adults at school understand the problems of middle school students.
34. Adults at school try to become personally acquainted with all the students.
35. My teachers miss me when I am absent from class.
36. Adults at school make an effort to make new students feel welcome at school.
37. I look forward to seeing my friends at school.
38. School staff are more likely to recognize students when they have done a good job than to criticize them for their shortcomings.
39. I feel that there is an adult or somebody that I can really talk to at school.
40. School staff have helped me to feel more confident about my ability.
41. I enjoy coming to school.
42. I hate to miss school.
43. I would be going to school whether or not I had to.
44. My education is helping me to set and achieve my future goals.
45. It is easy for me to get along with school staff and other students.
46. I think school staff enjoy working at school.

Generalized Self-efficacy Scale for Adolescents

47. When I have difficulties learning, if I keep trying I can learn.
48. When I get frustrated with schoolwork I give up.
49. If I have problems with schoolwork, I ask for help.
50. When I feel overwhelmed at school I keep trying.
51. I feel hopeless about doing well in school.
52. I cannot get started on work when I should.
53. I like animals.
54. I keep trying on a job until l get it right
55. I rarely achieve the goals that I set for myself.
56. I give up easily when completing my work.
57. I like to draw.
58. I avoid facing challenges.
59. If work looks difficult, I don't even bother to try it.
60. People are basically good.
61. When I have work I don't want to do, I do the work anyway.
62. When I decide to do something, I begin to work on it right away.

63. If I were an artist I would like to draw animals.
64. When learning something new, if it looks too hard I won't try it.
65. Failure just makes me try harder.
66. When I have problems at school, I work hard to solve them.
67. I feel good about my ability to do things.
68. I'm not good at doing things.
69. I can take care of myself.
70. I give up easily.
71. I cannot deal with most of the problems that come up in life.
72. It is difficult for me to make new friends.
73. I can handle any problem that comes up in my life.
74. I know how to solve the problems in my life.
75. I am good at making friends.

APPENDIX C
PROCEDURES

1. A list of sixth grade students who are overage for their grade and began sixth grade this year is provided for you. Invite these students to participate and distribute consent and assent forms. Forms are included in envelope labeled, "Consent Forms." The researcher recommends that you invite about twice as many students to participate than the number who will be either in the control or treatment groups. For example, if you will have ten students in the control group and ten in the treatment group, you will want to invite approximately 40 students to participate. The first 20 to return their permission forms will be included in the study.

2. Hold a party for students who return consent forms. At this time administer pre-tests to all students who have returned forms. An individual envelope for each student is provided. Have students place completed assessments back into envelopes with matching numbers. To facilitate students returning their forms, the researcher will reimburse you for the pizza and sodas that you can serve at the party.

3. Assign students to control or treatment groups using table of random numbers. Mark student envelopes with either C or T for control or treatment group. Make a list of the students in the control and treatment groups with the corresponding number that is marked on their envelope. Call me Ann Rai, 216-2586, to pick up the pre-tests. Do not hesitate to call if you have questions about how to use the random numbers table.

4. Deliver guidance unit to students assigned to treatment groups once a week for five weeks following Counselor's Manual. Please contact me if you must deviate from this schedule.

5. Administer post-tests to control and treatment groups. Read aloud the assessment instruments to the students. Make sure that all the students are answering in the appropriate place on the answer sheet. An individual envelope for each student is provided. Have students place completed assessments back into envelopes with matching numbers. Call me Ann Rai, 216-2586, to pick up the post-tests.

6. Administer follow-up tests to control and treatment groups one month after completing the guidance unit in the same manner in which you administered the pre- and post-tests. An individual envelope for each student is provided. Have

students place completed assessments back into envelopes with matching numbers. Call me Ann Rai, 216-2586, to pick up the post-tests.

An Adventure-based School Counseling Unit to

Improve the Transition to Middle School

Introduction

Dear Counselors,

Thanks so much for agreeing to participate in this study and for taking an active role in helping at-risk middle school students to have a smooth and effective transition into a new school. In your role as a school counselor, you are in the position to have a tremendous influence on the students with whom you work.

As you know well, the transition to middle school is a difficult time for many students, particularly students who have been retained or who are otherwise considered to be at-risk. At the time of transition, students are challenged by the confluence of two major changes, the transition to a new and dramatically different school environment and the transition from childhood to adolescence. The period is marked by declines in several areas including declines in academic performance, declines in self-perception, declines in motivation, and declines in connectedness.

The adventure-based counseling activities that are included are designed to help ease the transition to middle school for at-risk students by helping them feel more connected to and more positive about school. They should be fun and inviting not only for the students but for you as well. Enjoy the special time that you have with the students. Thanks again for your participation, and I wish you all the best in your important work as school counselors.

Sincerely,
Ann Allen Rai

Procedures

1. A list of sixth grade students who are overage for their grade and began sixth grade this year is provided for you. Invite these students to participate and distribute consent and assent forms. Forms are included in envelope labeled, "Consent Forms."

2. Hold a party for students who return consent forms. At this time administer pre-tests to all students who have returned forms. An individual envelope for each student is provided. Have students place completed assessments back into envelopes with matching numbers.

3. Assign students to control or treatment groups using table of random numbers. Mark student envelopes with either C or T for control or treatment group. Make a list of the students in the control and treatment groups with the corresponding number that is marked on their envelope. Call me Ann Rai, 216-2586, to pick up the pre-tests.

4. Deliver guidance unit to students assigned to treatment groups once a week for five weeks following Counselor's Manual.

5. Administer post-tests to control and treatment groups. An individual envelope for each student is provided. Have students place complete assessments back into envelopes with matching numbers. Call me Ann Rai, 216-2586, to pick up the post-tests.

6. Administer follow-up tests to control and treatment groups one month after completing the guidance unit. An individual envelope for each student is provided. Have students place completed assessments back into envelopes with matching numbers. Call me Ann Rai, 216-2586, to pick up the post-tests.

Overview of the Five-week ABC Guidance Unit

	Activities	Objectives
Session 1 Empowerment/Building Trusting Relationships	Full Value Contract Warp Speed Group Juggling	Empowerment Communication Trust-building Cooperation Planning
Session 2 Dealing with Frustration	Review Full Value Contract Ship Wreck Willow in the Wind	Communication Cooperation Learning skills to handle frustration Trust-building
Session 3 Persistence	Stepping Stones	Communication Cooperation Persistence Planning
Session 4 Overcoming Obstacles	TP Shuffle	Communication Trust-building Overcoming obstacles Cooperation Listening Skills
Session 5 Depending on Others	Tower Building	Planning Cooperation Communication Utilization of group resources Decision-making

Guidelines for facilitating Adventure-based Counseling Activities (Rohnke, 1984)

1. Make sure that all rules are clear to group members before they begin the activity.

2. Present the activity and the corresponding rules and then step back and let the group try to solve the problem. Although the group may stumble, refrain helping them solve the problem.

3. Be strict when enforcing the rules of the problem. If the group suspects that you won't enforce the rules, the activity can quickly dissolve into meaningless horseplay.

4. When conducting a processing session have the students sit in a circle. Request that the students not interrupt others when they are speaking and not to put down or ridicule what other students say. All students should be encouraged to participate in the conversation, but can also remain silent or pass if they choose to. Your goal is to establish a supportive environment where students feel free to say what they are thinking.

Ten Processing Tips for Group Leaders
(Nadler & Luckner, 1997)

1. Focus on here and now behavior, feelings, perceptions of the group members in a non-threatening manner helps to build group cohesion and trust. Example: What were you feeling during the experience? I noticed that each time the group tried to solve the problem the group became frustrated but then came up with very creative solutions.

2. Help students link their behavior, feelings, and thoughts that occur in the group to the same behavior in other settings such as school. The goal is to help students become responsible for what they used to do unconsciously or automatically. For example: What strengths do you bring to this activity? Where else do you use these same strengths? How did the group members respond when other members did not listen to instructions?

3. Give students the chance to make new choices for themselves. For example: Are you willing to try something new today? What would you do differently next time?

4. Help students generalize and transfer what they learn in the group. For example: How can you use this learning at school? What will prevent you from using what you learned at home?

5. Create an atmosphere of trust and mutual support. For example: What needs to happen for you to trust people? What did it feel like to trust group members for your physical safety?

6. Help students think about how they are communicating. For example: how did the group deal with members who had different opinions? How could you improve your communication?

7. Help students think about the decision-making process. For example: How did the group come up with that decision? What would be the best way for the group to decide what to do next?

8. Teach students about teamwork and cooperating. For example: On a scale of 1 to 10 how would you rank how you worked as a team? How could you have completed the task more efficiently? How did you plan what you would do?

9. Help students to think about how they solve problems. For example: What patterns have you noticed in the way you solve problems? What did different group members contribute to the process of solving the problem?

10. Help create closure for group activities. For example: What did you learn today? What did you do today that you are proud of?

Session One: Empowerment/Building Trusting Relationships

Objectives:
1. To create ground rules for the group in a manner that empowers group members.
2. To introduce group members to each other and begin to build trust.
3. To teach communication, cooperation, and planning skills.

Materials:
1. Large piece of paper with circle drawn in the middle and some group guidelines written down.
2. Three small balls, beanbags, or small stuffed animals.
3. Pencil or magic marker.
4. Stop watch or watch with a second hand.

Activities: Full Value Contract, Group Juggling, & Warp Speed

Full Value Contract (Rohnke & Butler, 1995)

Activity Introduction: Welcome. I'm glad that each of you is here. Over the next few weeks we will be participating in some fun and sometimes challenging activities. In order for you to get the full value out of our time together we are going to come up with a few group guidelines. I have a couple of guidelines in the middle of the circle, " No put downs and respect yourself and others." What are some other guidelines that you think you need in order for you to get full value?

Activity Procedures: Have students write their guidelines in the circle. When all group members who want to contribute have written their guidelines down, ask group members if they agree to these guidelines. Have members sign outside the circle showing their agreement.

Group Juggling (Rohnke & Butler, 1995)

Activity Introduction: Explain to the group that you have a challenge for them that will test their ability to work as a group, their memories, and their coordination.

Activity Procedure: Start the initiative by having the participants stand in a circle facing each. Pass the ball around the circle in a counterclockwise or clockwise rotation and have each student tell his or her first name to the group when he or she receives the ball. After each person in the group has introduced themselves, explain that each person is going to receive the ball from someone and then throw it to someone else in the circle that has not received the ball. The person throwing the ball must first call his or her own name and then the name of the person to whom they are throwing the

ball (i.e. Jack to Theresa, Theresa to Jerry). The last person throws the ball back to the first person. Each person must remember to whom they threw the ball and from whom they received it. Once the pattern is established after several rounds of throwing the ball, add a second ball and then a third ball. Have the group sit down in the circle and ask a few processing questions.

Rule: The person throwing the ball must first call his or her own name and then the name of the person to whom they are throwing the ball (i.e. Jack to Theresa, Theresa to Jerry). If names are not called the group must begin the process again.

Processing Questions:
1. What was the most challenging part of this initiative?
2. What skills did the group have to use in order to keep all the balls in motion?
3. Who took on leadership roles in the group?
4. What did they do that helped the group complete the task?

Warp Speed (Rohnke, 1984)

Activity Introduction: Have the group stand back up and announce to them that you have the next stage of the challenge for them.

Activity Procedure: The challenge is to see how fast the group can move the ball through the pattern they established earlier from start to finish. Use a watch to time how long it takes the group to accomplish this task.

Rules:
1. The ball starts and ends with the same person.
2. The ball must travel in the same pattern in which it was initially thrown.
3. Every person in the pattern must have possession of the ball.

Announce to the group the time it took them to complete the pattern. Ask them if they think they can do it faster. Give them a few minutes to plan how they will do things differently. Remind them of the rules. Time the group again and again ask them if they can do it faster. Repeat this pattern until the group can complete the task in less than two seconds.

Processing Questions:
1. How did the group initially face the problem?
2. How did the group come up with a solution?
3. What skills did the group use in order to solve the problem?
4. What was the experience like for you?
5. How did the group resolve differences of opinions?
6. How did the group communicate?
7. How could communication be improved?

Session Two: Dealing with Frustration

Objectives:
1. To teach students planning skills, communication skills, and skills for dealing with frustration.
2. To promote group cohesion and build trust between group members.

Materials: large circles to use as ships, tape.

Activities: Ship Wreck & Willow in the Wind

Ship Wreck (Rohnke, 1984).

Setting: Outdoors if possible or indoors in a space large enough for students to run.

Activity introduction: You will be divided into two groups. Each group will be given a ship to help them travel to the deserted island where they are sure to find gold and other treasures.

Activity Procedures: The object of the game is to navigate your ship through shark infested waters to the deserted island. (If outdoors, the deserted island can be located on the opposite side of the field. If indoors, to find the deserted island the group must follow the map marked on the floor with masking tape in a zigzag pattern (one zigzag pattern for each group).

Rules:
1. All members must hold onto or be in contact with the ship at all times or the ship will sink and your crew will have to go back to shore (lose all your points).
2. When I yell "Shark," all the members of your crew must jump on board your ship. The first crew with all their feet off the ground wins one point. The group with the most points at the end of the journey wins.

Processing Questions:
1. What was the experience of playing this game like for you?
2. How did you feel when your team lost all its points?
3. How did the group handle the frustration of losing points or not winning points during a shark attack?
4. What are some situations where students may feel frustrated in real life?
5. What are some ways that they might handle these frustrations?
6. What was the most challenging thing about this activity?
7. What skills did the group need in order to be successful?

Willow in the Wind (Rohnke, 1989).

Activity Introduction: In this activity you will need to trust others in the group. In order to prepare for the activity, I would like you to teach you a technique called "spotting." To spot, you stand with one leg extended back and weight evenly distributed between your two legs. Your hands are faced away from your body towards the center of the circle with your elbows slightly bent.

Activity Procedures: In this activity, the group stands in a circle shoulder-to-shoulder. One person stands rigidly in the middle of the circle and falls to one side of the circle. Before the person falls far the group members gently push the person in another direction. The sequence continues until the person being pushed seems relaxed and the group has gained confidence in their ability to work together. Continue the activity until all group members who want to take a turn being in the middle have had the opportunity.

Rule: The person in the center of the circle directs when the activity starts by saying, "Circle ready?" The group responds by saying, "Circle ready, fall away." The person in the center of the circle then says, "falling."

Processing questions:
1. What was the experience like in the center of the circle? In the outside circle?
2. What needed to happen for you in order for you to trust the members of the group?
3. What did it feel like to depend on the group for your physical safety?
4. What are the differences and similarities in the way you supported each other here and the way you support each other in class?
5. What needs to happen for you to be able to trust others at school?

Session Three: Persistence

Objectives:

1.   To teach communication, cooperation, and planning skills.
2.   To have students recognize their abilities to persist and to think about how this skill might be helpful in their academic life.

Materials: Masking tape (or yarn) and paper plates one less than the number of group members.

Activity: Stepping Stones (Rohnke & Butler, 1995)

Pre-activity Preparation: Mark off a start and finish line with masking tape approximately three to five feet per group member. If you are in a grassy area you can use yarn to mark off the start and finish lines.

Activity Introduction: There has been a forest fire in the Tallahassee woods and the only way to save your team is to get them across an alligator infested river.

Activity Procedures: The object is to get your whole team across the river using the stepping-stones provided (one less than the number of group members).

Rules:
1. Anyone touching the water must return to the riverbank.
2. If a stepping-stone is untouched the alligators will come and gobble it up. (The group facilitator will take away the paper plate if he/she sees it without a foot or hand on it.)
3. Group members can only move in a forward direction.

Processing Questions:
1. How did you feel during this activity?
2. What allowed the group to be successful?
3. What were some of the challenges the group faced?
4. How did the group handle the challenges?
5. Was there a point in the game where you felt like giving up? What helped you to persist?
6. Where are some other places where persistence might be helpful for you?
7. What kind of support do you need in order to persist in school?
8. Why do people quit when they face challenges in life?

Session Four: Overcoming Obstacles

Objectives:
1. To teach communication, cooperation, and planning skills.
2. To have students think about how they respond to obstacles and learn new skills for overcoming obstacles.

Materials: Fifteen feet by six inches piece of burlap.

Activity: Highway Shuffle (Rohnke, 1984)

Activity Introduction: The year is 3002 and the population of the world has increased by so much that it is so crowed that we can only walk around on very narrow sidewalks. If you fall off the sidewalks you are sure to get run over. Let's practice walking on a narrow strip so that we can learn to survive in the new world.

Activity Procedures: Split the group in half and have them stand on opposite ends of the strip facing each other. The object of the game is for the groups to exchange ends of the highway without touching the ground. After the group completes one attempt, give the group a few minutes for planning and have them try again. Allow for several attempts. Encourage the group to beat their record.

Rule: Each time a foot hits the ground; the group receives a 15 second penalty.

Processing Questions:
1. What happened the first time you tried to activity?
2. What obstacles did you face?
3. What did the group do to overcome the obstacles?
4. Do you think the group could do even better? How?
5. What was the most challenging part of this activity?
6. What kind of obstacles do you face in school?
7. What can you do to overcome these obstacles?
8. What skills did you use during this activity?
9. How might you be able to apply these in other areas of your life?

Session Five: Depending on Others

Objectives:
1. To teach students planning, cooperation, communication, and decision-making skills.
2. To help students to draw on group resources.

Materials: Six sheets of newspaper, 10 straws, 4 paper cups, 10 paper clips, 3 paper plates, one role of tape, and 6 sheets of 8"x11" paper for each group of five students.

Activity: Tower Building

Activity Introduction: A category five hurricane is expected to strike at any time. All the evacuation routes are blocked. Your team has been chosen to build a tower to help the residents of a small town to survive.

Activity Procedures: Give students the materials to build their tower and allow them about 25 minutes to build their tower. Once all the towers are built the facilitator will try to blow each of the towers down.

Rules:
1. You can only use the supplies that are provided.
2. The tower must be freestanding. (i.e., can't be taped to the floor or ceiling).
3. Your tower must be strong enough to withstand the winds of Hurricane (facilitator's last name).

Processing Questions:
1. How did you come up with the design?
2. What roles did different team members play in creating the tower?
3. How did the group handle differences in opinions?
4. What were the strengths that your group members displayed in building the tower?
5. What are some specific examples of how you cooperated?
6. How did it feel to work together?
7. What did you like and not like about how your group made decisions?
8. How well did you work as a team?
9. If you had to do this activity over again what would you do differently?

Activity: Closure

I want to thank all of you for your participation. It has been a lot of fun to get to know you. In closing I would like to do a go around and have each person say one word that describes their experience over the last few weeks.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ann Allen Rai was born in Evanston, Illinois, and grew up in Cleveland, Tennessee. She is the daughter of Larry and Judy Allen and the sister of Greg Allen. After graduating from Cleveland High School, she attended Wake Forest University where she majored in health and sport science and minored in biology. She went on to pursue a master's degree in guidance and counseling at the University of North Florida.
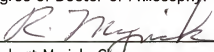
Ann has worked with children in all grade levels in a variety of settings throughout her career. She taught math and science in a psychiatric hospital for several years, served as the Site Manager for an after school program, Project Director for Communities in Schools, and Director of the Children's Enrichment Workshops, an arts program for elementary school students.

She began her school counseling career in Duval County while working for Communities in School. She completed her internship at an urban elementary school and gained her first job as a school counselor at A. Philip Randolph Academies of Technology. While completing her graduate work at the University of Florida, she worked as a guidance counselor at an alternative school for middle and high school students. She is a Florida Certified School Counselor and a National Board Certified Counselor.
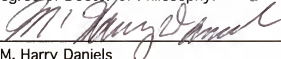
While completing her doctorate, Ann met her loving husband Atul. They now live in Huntsville, Alabama, with their one-year-old daughter, Hannah.

I certify that I have ready this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Robert Myrick, Chairperson
Professor of Counselor Education

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M. Harry Daniels
Professor of Counselor Education

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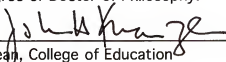
Sondra Smith
Assistant Professor of Counselor Education

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Professor of Educational Psychology

I certify that I have ready this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

August 2003

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Dean, Graduate School